

Language, Communication, and Intergroup Relations

A Celebration of
the Scholarship
of Howard Giles

Edited by Jake Harwood,
Jessica Gasiorek, Herbert Pierson,
Jon F. Nussbaum, and Cindy Gallois

LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Language, Communication, and Intergroup Relations presents the current state of knowledge at the intersection of language, communication, and intergroup relations, drawing on interdisciplinary work from the fields of communication, social psychology, and sociolinguistics. Building from that existing work, it presents a series of provocative and innovative new directions in this area.

The work is organized around a series of five themes:

- Language and Culture
- Intergroup Communication
- Intergenerational Relations
- Interpersonal Accommodation
- Institutional Accommodation.

Within each theme, prominent scholars present reviews of the literature, which are followed by responses, reactions, and extensions from a multidisciplinary group of researchers. These responses often move beyond typical academic prose and engage with the material in novel ways, including graphical theoretical models, short personal reflections, and creative prose. It is essential reading for students and academics in the interdisciplinary fields of communication, language, and social psychology.

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First published 2019
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 9781138308091 (hbk)

ISBN: 9781138308107 (pbk)

ISBN: 9781315142807 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Swales & Willis Ltd, Exeter, Devon, UK

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PART I

Introduction



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1

ACCOMMODATING A LEGEND

Howard Giles and the Social Psychology of Language and Communication

Jake Harwood, Jon F. Nussbaum, Herbert Pierson, Cindy Gallois, and Jessica Gasiorek

In Sergio Arau's 2004 mockumentary *A Day Without a Mexican*, California attempts to cope with the disappearance of its entire Mexican and Mexican American population. Daily activities grind to a halt as the state confronts the loss of an essential component of its economic and social functioning. The retirement of Howard ("Howie") Giles is a similarly momentous moment for those who study language, communication, and intergroup relations within the fields of social psychology and communication (to name just the most focal areas of Howie's work). What would those disciplinary areas look like without communication accommodation theory? Where would the study of bilingualism and relations between language groups be without ethnolinguistic identity theory? Would the study of intergroup relations have made the progress it has without the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality or the wealth of empirical data from Howie's published work?

The reference to *A Day Without a Mexican* is also pertinent because of the film's subtext—that a marginalized and disenfranchised group is actually essential to the functioning of a society. The message reflects a broader theme in Howie's work—one that is reflected in his academic writing and his broader service to the discipline and the community. Principles of fairness, justice, social equality, and egalitarian treatment of social groups in society are at the core of his work and his being.

Howie's impact is amplified by his 30+ Ph.D. students, many of whom are now leading figures in related areas of study. He has trained multiple generations of researchers, many of whom have trained their own graduate students, and so down the generations (we are at least at six generations of Ph.D. students). The collective work of this "family tree" constitutes a significant portion of entire sub-disciplines ("intergroup communication," for instance).

Beyond this, his influence on colleagues—both junior and senior—in nearly every country where research in social psychology or communication is done has been equally formative.

In this chapter we aim to provide a thematic account of Howie's academic biography, noting some specific moments of particular impact. In so doing, we will make connections to the substantive areas of this book. The chapter is organized around three major (and overlapping) thematic trends in Howie's work: communication accommodation, intergenerational relations, and language.

Communication Accommodation

One of the key early insights in Howie's early career was that people adjust their speech style based on *who* they are talking to (Giles, 1973). The basic insight is, of course, familiar to anybody with a modicum of self-awareness. However, the dominant paradigms at that time in sociolinguistics and psychology viewed such variation as “noise”—respondent error to be ignored. Howie's work instead transformed this “noise” into a sophisticated and paradigm-shifting theoretical framework—speech accommodation theory (SAT), and subsequently communication accommodation theory (CAT). The theory developed from an early focus on shifting or switching accents, dialects, and languages (e.g., Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973), to a much broader and wide-ranging analysis of shifts in communication style (e.g., Giles, 2016). Furthermore, it was transformed from a strictly interpersonal theory related to the similarity–attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) to a broadly based intergroup theory of interpersonal communication. The theory is now a staple of textbooks in the field of communication (e.g., Miller, 2005), and is the subject of numerous massively cited reviews (e.g., Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987).

The specific impact of this theory is reflected in two chapters in this volume, and those interested in the details of the theory are encouraged to study those chapters in detail. Zhang and Pitts (this volume) provide exemplary detail in considering the interpersonal dynamics of accommodation, specifying the basic processes of the theory and how those processes manifest in one-on-one exchanges. Watson and Soliz (this volume) extend this analysis to the numerous institutional settings in which accommodation has been examined. With rich applied examples, their chapter shows that accommodation is a theory that has real-world implications for how society functions, and that it can be the basis of education in effective intergroup communication (cf. Pitts & Harwood, 2015). The responses to these chapters posit innovative ways of measuring accommodation, and elaborate on its use especially in health and policing. They also point to some of the difficulties—moral, ethical, logistical, and intellectual—that come with applying this theory (or indeed any theory) in contexts outside the laboratory. The levels of analysis spanned by these chapters reflect the broader impact of Howie's work in crossing boundaries, both disciplinary and substantive.

The ways in which micro-level adjustments in conversation reflect and construct macro-level societal structures are infused throughout the history of research on accommodation, and indeed in other areas of Gilesean scholarship (see below).

Accommodation work also illustrates Howie's catholic interests. While focused on "traditional" communication processes, his work (and that of his associates) has traversed distinctly non-traditional areas in communication and social psychology, including dress/fashion (Keblysek & Giles, 2018), music (Giles, Denes, Hamilton, & Hajda, 2009), and dance (Pines & Giles, 2018). These are more than interesting digressions. Beyond their specifics, examining these topics illuminates fundamental questions concerning what people in communication, sociolinguistics, and the social psychology of language actually study. Is dance a form of communication and, if so, what type? Is musical expression "like" linguistic expression and, if so, how?

Intergenerational Relations

Howie's theoretical scholarship and practical research have significantly contributed to our understanding of the challenging and complex nature of intergenerational relations. In addition, he has added to our ability to produce communicative interventions that work to improve the quality of life for those involved within an intergenerational family, friend and professional relationship. As is true for the Accommodation and Language sections of this book honoring Howie, his communication accommodation theory (CAT) provides the solid foundation upon which the majority of intergenerational relations research is grounded, including: the communication predicament of aging model (CPA) (Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986); the communication enhancement model of aging (Ryan, Meredith, MacLean, & Orange, 1995); the age stereotype in interaction model (Hummert, 1994); the empowerment model of health and disability communication (Savundranayagam, Ryan, & Hummert, 2007); and, most recently, the communication ecology model of successful aging (Fowler, Gasiorek, & Giles, 2015; Gasiorek, Fowler, & Giles, 2015).

Mary Lee Hummert (this volume) provides a detailed discussion of Howie's scholarly impact upon the investigation of intergenerational relations, and her chapter (as with all in this book) is followed by numerous researcher commentaries that highlight the impact that Howie's scholarship has had upon their programmatic research agendas within the domain of intergenerational relations. Hummert focuses on three of Howie's notable contributions: (1) the distinctive features of nonaccommodative and accommodative intergenerational communication from the viewpoint of both older and younger individuals; (2) the role of culture in perceptions of accommodative and nonaccommodative intergenerational communication; and (3) developing a comprehensive model of intergenerational communication that expands both CAT and CPA to present a pathway to higher levels of competent intergenerational communication that

ultimately leads to successful intergenerational interactions and a higher quality of life. The commentaries offer a “behind the scenes” look into the dramatic increase of scholarship focusing on intergenerational relations and how Howie has passed forward his enthusiasm for this domain of research.

We feel it is important to highlight the life-span context within which Howie places intergenerational communication. From investigating British children’s language attitudes (Giles, Harrison, Creber, Smith, & Freeman, 1983), to investigating young adults’ retrospective accounts of intergenerational communication (Williams & Giles, 1996), to the models predicting successful aging for older adults, Howie has framed intergenerational communication as a life-span process that constructs age groups and age identity, and hence has identified age as a significant factor within our interactive lives. His work has profound consequences for how successfully we will manage the numerous challenges that confront us throughout the entirety of the life span.

Language

Language is thematically at the center of Howie’s work across his entire career. The early accommodation work focused particularly on the linguistic manifestations of ethnicity (accent, dialect, and choice of language: Bourhis, Giles, & Tajfel, 1973). When people from different language or dialect groups come into contact, what determines whose language gets spoken? Over time, this work grew to incorporate more micro-level paralinguistic phenomena (e.g., speech rate, pitch, accent: Giles & Bourhis, 1976), as well as higher-level discourse processes (e.g., self-disclosure, topic shifts: Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1989).

Embedded in this work from its earliest stage was an interest in the role of language in social categorization—how we put people into social categories based on how they talk and what they say (Giles & Reid, 2005; Louw-Potgieter & Giles, 1987). And, beyond that, the research directly addressed how such social categorization was not value-free, but rather infused with attitudinal substrates. When we hear someone talk, we don’t merely think, “Oh, she’s a member of group X.” Rather, we tend towards, “Oh, she’s a member of group X, so therefore she must be A, B, and C.” Howie’s work in this area defined, and re-defined, the study of language attitudes at that time and continues to influence such work to this day (Dragojevic & Giles, 2016; Dragojevic, Mastro, Giles, & Sink, 2016; Giles, 1970). These issues are picked up most forcefully by Raki and Maass’s chapter in the current book. Their chapter vividly describes the immensely complex interplay between how we categorize based on linguistic features, and the consequences of those categorizations, including for language. Among other things, their contribution demonstrates that apparently arcane language choices (e.g., the use of an adjective versus a verb) profoundly influence how we view another person and how we understand (and describe) their behavior.

The work on language also reflects the multi-level concerns of Howie's work—a fact most obviously manifest in the work on ethnolinguistic vitality (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). The vitality construct was developed to account for (and empirically assess) the relative strength of different language groups in any particular context. It has been examined on every continent, and has been extended to incredibly diverse ethnic and sociopolitical categories (e.g., Giles, Kutchukhides, Yagmur, & Noels, 2003), age groups (Giles et al., 2000), political groups (Pierson, Giles, & Young, 1987), and groups in the media (Abrams, Eveland, & Giles, 2003). It has also been extended to consider the psychological perspective of individuals within those contexts in the form of subjective vitality (Bourhis, Giles, & Rosenthal, 1981; Harwood, Giles, & Bourhis, 1994). The vitality construct has also extended far beyond the reach of Giles' own work, yielding productive and highly cited research from other scholars (e.g., Allard & Landry, 1986).

Zooming In, Zooming Out

The above descriptions note, in various ways, the multiple levels of Howie's intellectual work. Figure 1.1 attempts to array this multi-level diversity along two dimensions. Vertically, the figure notes traditional levels of social analysis—individual, interpersonal, and societal/cultural. The last, in the case of the scholarship we are discussing in this chapter, tends to be focused on intergroup issues and concerns. Horizontally, the figure highlights diversity in the granularity of the scholarship. Within levels of analysis, Howie's work has at times attended to processes occurring in a very local and detailed manner, while other times attending to much more global or larger scale issues. And, across all of the processes outlined in its cells, the figure acknowledges the attention to life-span processes prevalent in Howie's work and thinking. The “depth” in the figure indicates the point, manifest in so much of the literature here, that human communication and the social life of groups is not static, but rather constantly changes with age. Howie's work has constantly acknowledged such dynamic change, and has balanced consideration of the positive and negative dimensions of human aging in a more nuanced way than most, explicitly combatting ageist patterns of talk along the way (Giles, Coupland, Coupland, Williams, & Nussbaum, 1992; Nussbaum, Giles, & Worthington, 2015). The cells in the figure are numbered, and the brief descriptions below elaborate on each, providing exemplars of each category.

The first cell represents the variety of work examining how identities (and indeed other cognitive constructs) are treated as situationally variable, and subject to contextual influence. In a now classic study, Bourhis and Giles (1976), for instance, examined compliance with a request for assistance among Welsh respondents in two contexts. Respondents attending an English-language film were more likely to comply when a request was issued in standard (RP) English or in a mild Welsh accent, as compared to a broad Welsh accent. On the other

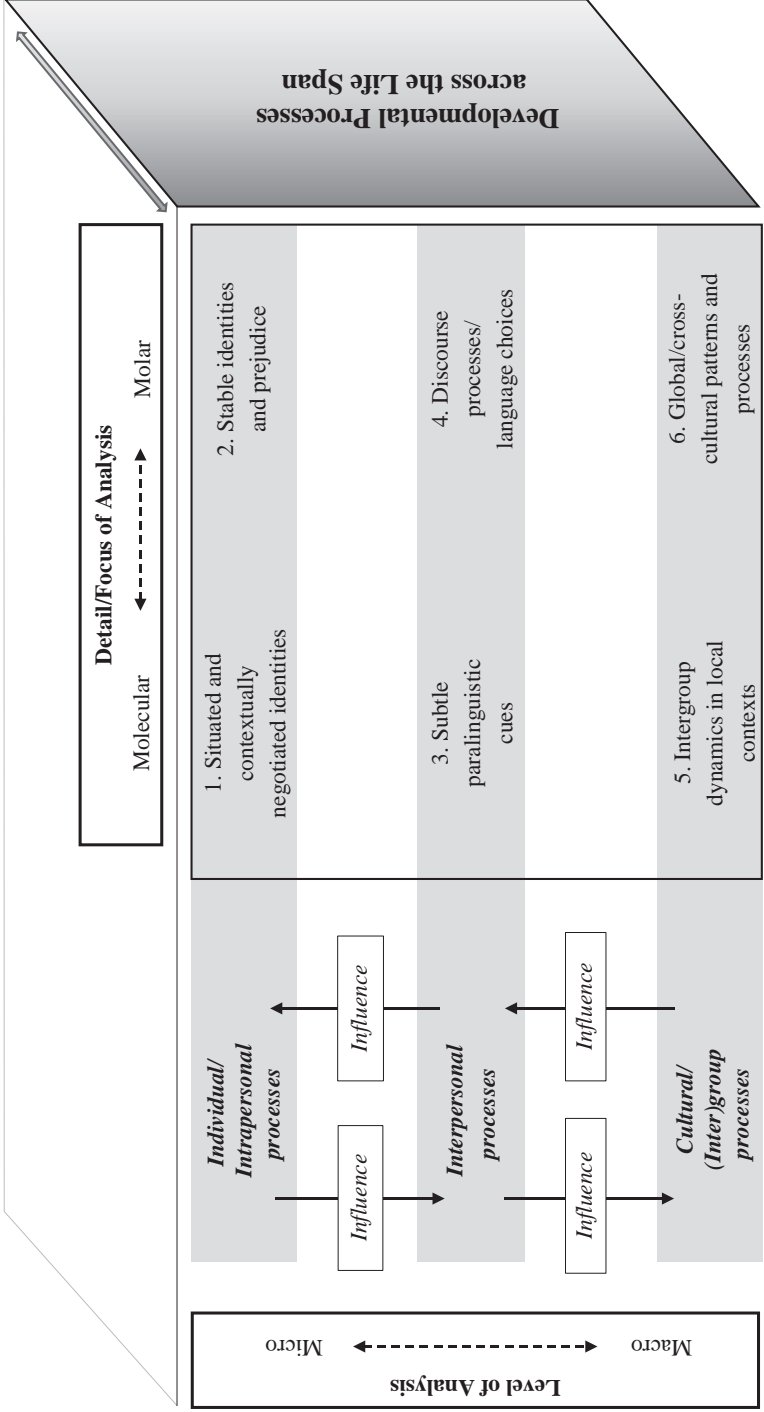


FIGURE 1.1 Howard Giles's scholarly work considered on dimensions relating to level of analysis and detail of analysis.

hand, bilingual (Welsh and English) respondents attending a Welsh-language performance were significantly more likely to comply with a response issued in Welsh, and virtually never complied with an RP request. The setting presumably heightened or dampened Welsh identity, and made the use of RP more or less normatively acceptable.

In contrast to this situationally variable approach to intrapersonal processes, Giles' work has also broken new ground in examining more stable and enduring psychological structures. The examination of enduring attitudes about groups, for instance, has been a mainstay of his work. This is particularly apparent in his numerous examinations of language attitudes. In many cases, these studies demonstrate that listeners' attitudes about language varieties are relatively stable, reflecting social stereotypes and long-standing intergroup inequities. Anglo perceptions of Hispanic accents in Southern California, for instance, tend to be more negative than their perceptions of Anglo accents, independent of variation in the local linguistic landscape (Dailey, Giles, & Jansma, 2005). Thus, Giles' work has demonstrated a sophisticated ability to acknowledge the ongoing, "chronic" nature of social attitudes, stereotypes, and identities, while also recognizing that the social context precipitates constant subtle (or sometimes quite dramatic) shifts in those same structures. As indicated with the arrows on the left of the figure, Howie's work has often focused on how these intrapersonal processes manifest at the interpersonal level: attitudes influencing accommodation; identities shaping discourse processes.

A similar diversity in the focus or detail of analysis occurs in Howie's work at the interpersonal level. Some of his most renowned work examines linguistic changes at a quite subtle level (see cell 3 in Figure 1.1). Above and beyond issues of accent shifts (e.g., between mild and broad accents), as already discussed above, his work has examined variation in speech rate, pitch, and other fine-grained paralinguistic phenomena. Brown, Giles, and Thakerar (1985), for instance, show that increasing speech rate is monotonically associated with increasing perceptions of competence. Similarly, Mulac and Giles (1996) demonstrate the power of very specific vocal age cues in influencing age-categorizations of speakers and subsequent age stereotyping (see also Giles & Powesland, 1975; Scherer & Giles, 1979, for instance).

The fourth cell in Figure 1.1 represents the body of Howie's work addressing more global language phenomena. Leets and Giles (1997), for instance, examine the effects of hate speech targeting Asian Americans. In an experimental study, the researchers manipulated the severity of the attack, which in some conditions included explicitly offensive and derogatory ethnic slurs. At a less "hot," but equally consequential, level, Giles' work on intergenerational communication has examined broad discursive patterns involving phenomena such as patronizing speech, painful disclosure, and self-disclosure of age. Indeed, and returning to the ethnic sphere, a number of Howie's early studies reflect people's choices about which language to speak—a fairly macro-level

language decision (e.g., Simard, Taylor, & Giles, 1976). Thus, his work has effectively traversed the lines between fine-grained “unconscious” and much broader and intentional types of language use. These interpersonal processes, of course, shape the intrapersonal (see left side of the figure), with conversations and discourse processes influencing our stereotypes and intergroup cognitions. Howie’s work also addresses how the interpersonal constructs the more macro: how we talk about groups and group memberships has real consequences for the social status quo (e.g., Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, & Henwood, 1986).

The final line in the cell reflects Howie’s concerns with larger-scale social dynamics. At the molecular level, this has been reflected in focused and detailed examinations of specific social contexts. In his early work, the attitudes, identities, and social dynamics of South Wales were detailed in a number of empirical and theoretical pieces (e.g., Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1977). Later work has examined politically hot settings such as the role of race in police–community relations (Dixon, Schell, Giles, & Drogos, 2008) or U.S. debates around politically charged English-only language legislation (Barker & Giles, 2004). At other times, his work has examined situations previously unexplored and little known prior to his work (e.g., Danish in Southern California: Kristiansen, Harwood, & Giles, 1991).

At other times, much more global and enduring processes have been the focus of this work. Cross-cultural comparative work on aging set the stage for debunking common perceptions that ageism is a solely Western phenomenon (Giles et al., 2003). Examination of larger language phenomena similarly demonstrates the broad vision of some of Giles’ work. Empirical and theoretical work has examined such thorny and globally consequential issues as language death (e.g., Giles & Byrne, 1982).

As noted already, the distinctions in Figure 1.1 should not be interpreted as suggesting that these are distinct (or necessarily always clearly distinguishable) lines of work. Indeed, one characteristic of Giles’ work is the ability to shift between and merge such levels. Attitudes about the English-only movement are tied to fairly micro-level language-attitudes processes (Giles, Williams, Mackie, & Rosselli, 1995), and broad macro-level patterns of group vitality are connected to individual subjective impressions of group status (Young, Bell, & Giles, 1988). Through examining macro- and micro-level processes with more fine-grained and more expansive approaches, he has provided a transformative view of our understanding of language, communication, and society.

This Book

This book is divided into five main areas, reflecting important foci in Giles’ work. The main chapters in these areas have already been previewed to some extent earlier in this chapter. The chapters address language and culture (Noels et al., this volume), intergroup communication (Raki & Maass, this volume), intergenerational

communication (Hummert, this volume), accommodation processes at the individual level (Zhang & Pitts, this volume), and accommodation at the institutional level (Watson & Soliz, this volume). Accompanying each of the chapters is a series of commentaries and responses. The respondents were given free rein to expand on the theme of their main chapter, and in doing so to reflect on Howie's contributions to that area in an academic or more personal manner. The commentaries range from sober academic contributions to more creative and at times humorous reflections. We hope they provide a sense of the deeply intellectual, but also vivaciously human, person to whom this book is dedicated.

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