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COMPULSIVE TALKERS: PERCEPTIONS OF OVER TALKERS WITHIN THE

WORKPLACE

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University of Nebraska, 2006

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Compulsive talkers have been the focus of limited communication studies, and those that have been written addressed the need for defining and identifying those considered to be over communicators. To date, no recorded studies has investigated the potentially negative impact compulsive talkers could have on those that work with them. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions and reactions of interactants with compulsive talkers in the workplace. Interviews with coworkers of compulsive talkers were conducted to determine their perceptions of these over talkers and their attributes. From these interviews, four distinct patterns emerged. Overall, compulsive talkers were perceived negatively by their coworkers, perceived to discuss a variety of topics, ignored most cues to end the conversation, and impacted the workplace negatively.

Keywords: compulsive communicator, compulsive talker, talkaholic, talks too much, over talkers

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Chapter One: Introduction

A fellow coworker, known for his creativity, hard work, and dedication, was recently promoted to lead a staff of five individuals. This supervisor had the "gift of gab" and talked constantly with his subordinates. Whether the topic was work related or not, the supervisor's talk increased to a level where productivity and morale began to dramatically decline. The employees complained to upper management that the excessive talk by their new supervisor was forcing them to make decisions about finding employment outside of the company. The compulsive talker's immediate manager claimed the talkative supervisor consistently crossed the line from being supportive of his staff to damaging the flow of work due to his constant chatter. A mutually agreed upon demotion eventually occurred and the talkative manager vowed to never manage again. He chose to keep his high level of talkativeness instead of advancing his career. He still talks compulsively.

I became interested in the topic of compulsive talkers after having experiences with compulsive talkers in the workplace. The particular individual in the story above is a coworker of mine who always talks nonstop to everyone at work. The moment I would see him in the hallway I knew that the next ten minutes would be dominated by his constant chatter. Research in the area of communication avoidance primarily focuses on the topics of shyness, willingness to communicate (WTC) and reticence, while another area, excessive communication, receives little investigation. Currently, what few studies are being done center on defining and identifying the characteristics of compulsive talkers. Situational research on compulsive talkers, or

talkaholics, focuses primarily on the classroom environment with limited, if any, research designed to determine the perceptions of conversational partners and help them cope with compulsive talkers' behavior.

Certain key concepts describe essentially the same principle, including the terms "talkaholics" and "compulsive talkers." To remain consistent throughout this study, the term "compulsive talker" will be used. Often the label "talks too much" becomes confused with compulsive talk, but according to McCroskey and Richmond (1993) these are separate areas of research. Most people can recall someone in their lives they believe talks too much, but according to the literature a difference exists between a person who talks too much and someone who is truly compulsive in their talk. According to McCroskey and Richmond (1995), someone who talks too much has an issue of quality of talk, while a compulsive talker has an issue of quantity of talk, or what they indicate is a "product of a qualitative rather than a quantitative evaluation" (p. 48). A person may be labeled as one who talks too much because others do not like what he or she has to say. Currently, no studies have addressed the accuracy of their distinction. In fact, McCroskey and Richmond questioned whether these individuals are different or the same as each other. For example, based on the literature, Person A enjoys engaging in conversation about politics and begins a rather one-sided interaction with Person B. Person B is uncomfortable discussing politics and holds different political views from Person A, who continues to discuss his stance on a current hot topic. Since Person A becomes rather enthusiastic during the discussion, he continues to emphasize his stance on the topic without much

interruption. Once the conversation ends, Person B, completely in disagreement with the argument, mentions to a friend that Person A really talks too much. In this case, Person A is not necessarily a compulsive talker, but rather gets excited with the opportunity to share his political beliefs. Person B is using a quantitative term to evaluate a perceived qualitative problem.

By definition, McCroskey and Richmond believe compulsive talkers have a self-aware compulsive behavior to consistently talk past the point of necessity across all situations (1993). According to McCroskey and Richmond (1993), compulsive talkers compare similarly to other compulsive behaviors, including alcoholics, shopaholics, and workaholics, because of their compulsive tendencies. The regularity of their behavior occurs because the compulsive talker becomes addicted to talking. Like other compulsive behaviors, the need for talking becomes excessive and is taken to the extreme.

As McCroskey and Richmond (1995) suggest, compulsive talkers are aware of their over talkativeness but do not find their behavior to be particularly damaging. In fact, compulsive talkers even laugh at the fact that anyone would consider talking excessively as a problem. In the case of my coworker, his constant need to talk excessively resulted in a demotion from a supervisory role. Even today he still believes his talkative behavior is not a problem.

Therefore, a gap may exist when compulsive talkers view their communication as not having a negative impact on the way they are perceived, while other people involved in the interaction perceive compulsive talkers negatively.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to explore how coworkers perceive compulsive talkers in the workplace. What exactly are the perceptions of these people who must interact daily with compulsive talking coworkers? The goal of this study is to determine how those coworkers of compulsive talkers perceive their talkativeness.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Compulsive Talkers and Talkaholics

Research in the area of compulsive talkers is extremely limited. Since the first study by McCroskey and Richmond in 1993, only seven studies have been published that focus on compulsive talkers. McCroskey and Richmond began the process of defining compulsive talkers with their first two studies in 1993 and 1995. The last studies to be published on compulsive talkers were in 2001 when Fortney, Johnson and Long researched the impact of compulsive talkers on the classroom. To date, no additional studies have been published since 2001, leaving a large quantity of unanswered questions.

Earlier studies focusing on quantity of talk were not focused primarily on those who talked excessively, but instead individuals who talk more in certain situations. Mortensen, Arnston, and Lustig (1977) measured verbal behaviors, including number of words and duration of talk, of individuals during highly-structured interviews and less structured discussion groups. The authors defined those who tended to talk more than others as over-verbalizers. While their study focused more on speaking styles, including rate of speech, the authors did conclude that over-talkers who are ineffective communicators are aware of the fact that they tend to talk a lot. Furthermore, over-verbalizes who are viewed as effective communicators were often known for having stronger leadership skills. The findings prompted the authors to question if talkative people would modify their behavior depending on the situation or if the over-verbalization was constant.

In task situations, Arntson, Mortensen, and Lustig (1980) established that team members often resented talkative individuals who dominate the group. This was particularly true when the talkativeness got in the way of the group's goals. Often the less verbal participants spent their time attempting to interrupt the talkative individual. On the other hand, the talkers viewed their behavior as having a positive influence over the group. This initial research on the topic of talkative individuals claimed that people who tend to talk a lot have a higher opinion of their communication skills than do the people with whom they communicate.

The early pioneers in the research of compulsive talkers were McCroskey and Richmond (1993). In this study, they closely linked the terms talkaholics and compulsive talkers to essentially describe the same person. Compulsive talkers receive such a label because of a disapproval surrounding their quantity of talk. A compulsive talker talks non-stop. In short, they tend to talk excessively in all situations and take "a good thing too far" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993, p. 108).

People considered to be compulsive talkers can be difficult to define; therefore, McCroskey and Richmond (1993) identified these specific characteristics. First, compulsive talkers become compulsive in their behavior. Like shopaholics and sexaholics, a talkaholic cannot be selective in their talkative behavior. They become addicted to talking, so this behavior cannot be turned on and off. Second, this desire to constantly talk remains consistent across all situations. Compulsive talkers will display the same behavior at work, school, and home. Third, compulsive talkers also have a strong sense of awareness concerning their behavior. They know they talk a

lot more than most people, because they have heard the comments about their talkativeness for years, and openly admit that they love to talk. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, they tend to talk past the point of necessity, which is typically not in their best interest (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993). Compulsive talkers do not know when to stop talking. If they do, then they completely ignore any signs of aggravation and continue to talk.

To assist in identifying compulsive talkers, McCroskey and Richmond (1993) created the Talkaholic Scale (TS) (see Appendix A). This self-report, ten-item scale with six filler items was designed to measure a person's awareness of their tendency to talk compulsively. The scale was found to have strong reliability and validity, and measures whether a participant has the characteristics of a compulsive talker.

Furthermore, in this study the authors attempted to explain the difference between the concepts of individuals who talk too much and individuals who are compulsive in their behavior. The root of their discussion focused on the confusion of quality of talk and quantity of talk:

> One possible explanation for (the) apparent discrepancy between results of the formal research and what lay people consistently report is that lay reports my be confusing quality with quantity. That is, if a person does not like what someone says, one of the ways of describing that response is to refer to the person as one who "talks too much." Thus, "talks too much" is a negative quantitative term for a negative qualitative reaction. Indeed, it might be difficult for person "A" to use the "talks too much" description for a person

who spends an excessive amount of time talking to other persons about A's positive qualities, even though such behavior might be somewhat embarrassing to "A." (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993, p. 108).

In their opinion, people who talk too much have a quality issue with their communication. They questioned whether people who talk too much are labeled such because their communication style and competency levels are lacking. These individuals ignore cues to stop talking, discuss topics that are annoying or embarrassing to others, and avoid turn taking. On the other hand, people who are compulsive talkers have a quantity issue with their communication. The concern for them surrounds the pure amount of time they spend talking during conversations. Therefore, for purposes of their current and future studies, McCroskey and Richmond believed compulsive talkers have a quantity of talk issue and that distinction was what would set them apart from other communicators.

McCroskey and Richmond (1995) further focused on the correlates of compulsive communicators by testing the TS. This investigation was successful in distinguishing the differences between compulsive talkers and those who were not. In their 1993 study, McCroskey and Richmond hypothesized that a shy person is not the opposite of a compulsive talker. In fact, the authors claimed that the opposite of a shy person would be an individual who communicates "within the normal range in term of talking quantity," (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993, p. 109). To answer their questions, McCroskey and Richmond (1995) contacted over 800 college students to participate in their studies by having them complete the TS. The authors claimed that

compulsive talkers were extroverted, had a high willingness to communicate, and were both assertive and responsive. As hypothesized, compulsive talkers were not communication apprehensive. Through interviews with compulsive talker, the authors once again claimed that compulsive talkers differed from those who are labeled as talking too much, due to their quantity of talk and not the quality. In the study, the authors suggested that this issue clearly needs additional studies in order to determine whether these individuals are distinctly different. Therefore, they called for future studies to find if the quality of the talk outweighs the importance of quantity, and if these individuals are truly different people. Once again, the issue of people who talk too much being confused with compulsive talkers required further explanation.

At the conclusion of their 1995 study, McCroskey and Richmond conducted interviews with students in the classroom who reported themselves as being compulsive talkers. While faulty recording equipment limited this research to a few pages of notes, it provided insight into the negative consequences associated with compulsive talk. Many of the participants were proud of their talkative behavior and did not perceive their communication to be a problem. In fact, they believed their compulsive behavior helped them get what they wanted, because people listen to those who talk more. They had no desire to change their behavior even though their compulsive talk often resulted in disciplinary actions by their teachers. Many of the compulsive talkers mentioned how they got in trouble all the time for talking, mostly during class. They also commented that their behavior was uncontrollable and

probably unchangeable. These compulsive talkers commented that they knew of someone who they believed talk too much; this prompts McCroskey and Richmond to query whether the participants were referring to those who lack quality instead of the quantity of talk. The authors suggested these interviews got closer to the concept of an individual talking past the point of necessity and urged future studies.

Ifert, Long and Fortney (1998) first examined compulsive communication in the classroom to look at variances in traits of compulsive talkers. Their sample was comprised of 530 college students who voluntarily completed the TS, the Self-Perceived Communication Competence Scale (SPCC), the PRCA, the Argumentativeness Scale (ARG), and the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale (VAGG). Their results confirmed a positive relationship between the SPCC and argumentativeness and an inverse relationship between SPCC and communication apprehension (CA). The authors suggested the need to develop approaches to effectively interact with compulsive communicators.

Bostrom and Harrington (1999) gathered data from 28 people considered to be compulsive talkers by their peers. The participants completed six self-report scales, including the Predisposition toward Verbal Behavior (PVB), Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), Rosenberg's scale to measure self-esteem, Rotter's scale to assess Locus of Control, a "Communication Attitude Index," and a general argumentativeness scale. The findings showed compulsive talkers overvalue what they have to say, continue to talk nonstop, and damage others' perceptions of them by continuing to talk. According to the authors, compulsive

talkers differed from normal communicators in five areas of communication: dominance, frequency, inhibition, attitude, and apprehension. When compared to normal communicators, the talkers were found to talk with greater frequency, showed more dominance, and had less inhibition. According to the researchers, these results showed the participants had an accurate view of their communicative behavior and the compulsive talkers knew they talked excessively. Furthermore, compulsive talkers' attitudes toward communication were more positive, and they experienced less communication apprehension, when compared to the normal verbalizing group.

Compulsive Communication in Context

Once the overall characteristics of compulsive talkers were determined, research transitioned from defining compulsive talkers to studying the impact of compulsive talkers in various situations. While these early studies centered on speaking styles and not necessarily compulsive talk, other researchers focused on observing compulsive talkers in a college classroom setting. Long, Fortney, and Johnson (2000) developed an observer measure of compulsive communicators using McCroskey and Richmond's Talkaholic Scale. Until these studies, compulsive communication had been measured only by a self-report. With the observer report, comparisons could be made of measurements of compulsive talkers between the self-report and observer survey. The authors looked into possible differences between self-perceived and observer reports to determine if compulsive talkers caused positive or negative reactions in those around them. Student observers completed a newly developed Talkaholic Scale (TS) - Observer Report to rate their classmates'

compulsive communication (see Appendix B). The authors cautioned that classroom peers may not have opportunity to view a compulsive talker beyond the classroom, while the talker can use their entire life to pull observations from. This may lead to differences between the two reports. Overall, the researchers found a significant correlation between the self-report and the observer survey.

The next studies of Fortney, Johnson, and Long's research (2001) on compulsive communicators in the classroom found students' self-perceptions of communication competence were changed when compulsive talkers were members of their classes. The authors hypothesized a classmate's self-perception of their communication skill level would be impacted with a compulsive talker's presence in the classroom. They found compulsive talkers did influence classmates' learning in a negative manner. The non-talkative classmates felt their communicative skills were not as strong as those who were more talkative in class. The researchers called for future studies to look into teacher strategies created to address compulsive communication in their classroom, including interaction strategies and course design.

Critique of Literature

These early studies developed what we know about compulsive talkers by focusing on defining and measuring who compulsive talkers specifically are and perceptions of them in the classroom. McCroskey and Richmond were the first to define and begin identifying compulsive talkers. Their research (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993, 1995) claimed the differences between talkative people and those who are truly compulsive could be determined through the use of the Talkaholic

Scale. McCroskey and Richmond's (1993) research suggested quantity of talk truly defines a compulsive talker, but no studies had validated this hypothesis. Long et al. (2000) created the Talkaholic Scale - Observer Report to further investigate the impact of compulsive talkers. Both scales proved to be valid and complement each other.

As you can see, there are many details we still do not know concerning compulsive talkers. While the focus of previous research was centered on labeling and defining compulsive talkers and talkaholics, the researchers did not delve into the impact compulsive talkers have on themselves across other situations, and what possibilities exist to help solve this behavior. These two central issues are very important steps and require additional focus from researchers.

The first issue is studies such as Fortney et al. (2001) describe a compulsive talker as damaging to the classroom learning environment. The authors discussed areas of opportunity for studies, but since then there has been no discussion on techniques teachers could implement to effectively handle compulsive talkers in order to maintain a good classroom climate. Programs currently exist to help people with communication apprehension overcome their fear, but no programs or techniques exist to help compulsive talkers. Of course, speech fright research indicates that approximately 70 to 75 percent of the population has some fear of speaking in public (Richmond & McCroskey, 1995). In comparison, five percent of the population tends to talk compulsively (McCroskey & Richmond, 1995). Nonetheless, compulsive talkers deserve techniques to help control the constant urge to verbalize. This could

prove difficult as compulsive talkers are self aware of their need for talk, but feel the compulsiveness of their communication is not a problem. Research into helping compulsive talkers cope with their behavior could provide useful.

The second central issue surrounds whether compulsive communication has a negative consequence for those individuals who constantly feel the need to talk. Several studies discuss how compulsive communicators will cross the line from participating in normal conversation to the point of being annoying, but no conclusion has been reached as to what this line is (McCroskey & Richmond, 1993, 1995). The possibility exists that compulsive talkers violate social norms by deviating from what people expect in a communication situation. Societal norms dictate that people who talk more are well liked (Arntson, Mortensen, & Lustig, 1980), but research indicates compulsive talkers impact those around them in a negative way (Fortney, Johnson, & Long, 2001). Society has standards surrounding the amount of appropriate talk. This could be the case in Fortney, Johnson, and Long's research (2001) on classroom situations, where a compulsive talking student becomes the hub and takes the attention of the class away from the subject matter. The class focuses on the talkative behavior of the student, which results in lower perceptions of a compulsive talker's communication ability. What types of perceptions do interactants have towards those who excessively communicate? Early literature failed to determine solutions for those who interact with compulsive talkers on a day-to-day basis. Are there certain methods individuals use in order to control the excessive talk of their compulsive talking coworkers? What about interactions with compulsive talkers in the workplace

or social situations? To date, the literature has strictly focused on the impact in the classroom, leaving an opportunity to look into the impact of compulsive talk in the workplace.

Researching the workplace impact of compulsive talkers should be valuable. People spend more of their non-sleeping hours during the week at work instead of at home. Unfortunately, many people do not have the opportunity to choose their coworkers or determine who they get to sit by at work. In the classroom, students typically can choose who they sit by and they are not in the same class all day or every day. Furthermore, at work the opportunities to get up and leave from the conversation are much more difficult. A coworker cannot completely avoid or ignore someone they work with for fear that the behavior would impact work flow. This impact of compulsive talkers on those they work with has the likelihood of being much greater than for those who attend school with a compulsive talker.

Research Questions

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the perceptions of those who interact with compulsive talkers in the workplace. As previously claimed, compulsive talkers have the tendency to talk beyond what is required in the situation, but does this behavior result in negative perceptions by those they work with? The people who work closely with compulsive talkers may respond negatively to these behaviors or may attempt to ignore them completely. If so, in what ways do these individuals try and cope with the compulsive behavior? To explore these issues further the following research questions were developed.

R1: How do people perceive and react to compulsive talkers in the workplace?

R2: What are people's assessments of compulsive talkers?

R3: How do people cope with compulsive talkers?

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Method

I collected the data through personal interviews with a set of 14 participants. Interviewing was the best method to gain deeper understanding of the individual's experiences with compulsive talkers in the workplace. Interviewing individuals who work directly with compulsive talkers provides rich stories and accounts of their experiences with their coworkers. Furthermore, interviewing is a proven and important method in determining how an individual's perception may have been developed and influenced throughout their interactions.

Therefore, for this study, a set of open-ended questions was created to specifically answer the proposed research questions. These face-to-face interviews were conducted using a combination of the interview schedule method and the interview guide approach. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest the combination of the two methods can be beneficial as it allows for both standardization of the order of the questions and flexibility in the wording of these questions. This type of method is primarily useful in uncovering the perspectives of the participants, while also providing detailed stories and accounts of these participants' interactions with compulsive talkers. A standardized open-ended set of questions provides a chance for a consistent set of questions, while the interview guide approach allows the opportunity to probe further when necessary. Since the interviewees most likely have tight schedules, preparing the method in this manner insures a timelier interview process.

The following eleven primary questions were asked in each of the interviews (see Appendix C): (a) What does this person do that makes you think they talk too much? (b) what does this person talk about? (c) how do they talk about these things? (d) what are your initial thoughts when confronted by this compulsive talker? (e) describe a typical encounter with this compulsive talker. (f) if I were to observe you interact with this compulsive talker at work what would I see and hear? (g) how does interacting with this person affect you? (h) how does this affect your workplace? (i) in what ways do you try to cope with their behavior? (j) how do you end conversations with this person? (k) describe your opinion of this person you have discussed. Interviews were concluded by asking if the participants would like to add anything else.

The first question was designed to start the discussion with an open-ended question to get the participant thinking about the compulsive talker they know. This provided a frame of reference at the beginning and a better understanding of their current work situation. The next group of questions was used to query about their interactions with the compulsive talker they identified, including what they usually discussed during their interactions, their initial thoughts of this individual and typical conversations. These questions allowed for story telling and reflection upon previous encounters, including their method of ending or avoiding contact with compulsive talkers. Gathering the opinions of these participants was important in order to fully understand their perceptions and the potential impact of compulsive talkers on their place of business.

The answers to these questions also provide the opportunity to explore the line between normal talk and excessive talk, while diving in to distinctions of quantity of talk versus quality of talk. As a previous study by McCroskey and Richmond (1993) has indicated, these distinctions tend to be murky.

Each interview was tape recorded with the participant's approval and hand written notes were also taken as a precaution. Transcriptions typically took place within 24 hours of the completed interviews. The transcribed data were stored electronically in a personal computer, while paper copies of the data were held in a file cabinet.

Most of these interviews were held away from the participant's work place at the request of the participants. Most occurred either in their homes or in a restaurant. The participants were then able to openly discuss the compulsive talker away from work and in a place that allowed them to relax. These locations were typically free from any other distractions, so the interviews were conducted with minimal interruptions.

Interviews

Since this study deals with compulsive talkers in the workplace, data were collected by interviewing business professionals. Between July 2005 and July 2006, 14 personal interviews were conducted with the average interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Each of these participants' places of business was within a variety of occupations in the Midwest. The individuals' occupations also ranged across several departments and ranks. Bankers, marketers, teachers, account

executives and retail sales people all participated in the study, with the respondents' professional level within the company varying from hourly employees to upper level managers. The sizes of these organizations also ranged greatly from individually owned small businesses to large Fortune 500 companies. Furthermore, the participants' desks resided in a variety of locations including cubicles and offices.

The first participant in this study is Harry, who is currently a professor at a large Midwestern university. His work space resides in an office that is in close proximity to the compulsive talker's office he describes in the interview. Harry spends most of his work hours in the office or in the classroom.

Another participant, Ryan, is an account executive for a medium sized advertising agency and has several large clients. The agency is a family owned business and the compulsive talker is a close relative to the owner. The compulsive talker in Ryan's example is also an account executive with the agency, but is limited to only a few clients. Ryan's job requires him to be out of the office quite frequently, so he is not constantly in contact with the individual.

Within this company there are two compulsive talkers. Sheryl also works at the same agency as Ryan. Her examples pertain to the other compulsive talker in their office. Although the agency recently remodeled their work space, Sheryl's desk was located next to the compulsive talker at the time of the interview.

Participant number four, John, works in business operations as a financial analyst for a large communications company. He shares an office with another participant, Ralph, who is a marketing manager. In their situation, the compulsive

talker will stop by their office a few times a day to have a conversation.

The next participant, Bill, is not only a marketing manager, but an adjunct marketing professor at a midsize university. Bill's compulsive talker interacts with him at the university, so his contact with him is on a part-time basis.

Maddy is a branch manager at a large bank institution. She is responsible for the entire branch location and has several direct reports. The compulsive talker in her example is one of her direct reports and therefore is somebody she must interact with on a daily basis. This employee's desk is within view of Maddy's office.

Participant number eight, Phillip, works as a loan officer for a large Midwestern bank. In his situation, the compulsive talker interacts with him mostly over the telephone so he has little face to face communication with her. The compulsive talker's office is about three miles away from Phillip's. On the other hand, Denise works in the same office as Phillip's compulsive talker. Denise is a mortgage loan processor for the same banking institution. Her desk is in close proximity to the compulsive talker's desk.

Jane is a course developer for the Air Force who coordinates and works closely with the field experts and instructors. She also sits in a cubicle which is in close proximity with the compulsive talkers in her examples.

Mick is a technical writer in the armed services. He works very closely with the compulsive talker and has done so for over a year and a half. They both sit in cubicles within the same department.

Michelle works as a computer programmer for a small company. She holds a

specialist ranking and sits in a cubicle. The compulsive talker works within her department, but his desk does not reside near Michelle's.

Tracy has a management level position within a health related field and has experience in hiring and supervising staff. Her compulsive talker was originally someone who she had hired, but now works with Tracy on a consulting basis. At one point they were close friends before beginning their work relationship.

JoAnne holds a project leader position with a medium sized company. The team sits within a cubicle environment, so the organization can build a team based, collaborative department. Therefore, the whole project team sits together, which includes the compulsive talker in her examples.

These participants were purposefully selected because of their experiences with compulsive talkers in the workplace. Since five percent of the population would be considered compulsive talkers, locating certain individuals who work with these types of people was a bit challenging. Therefore, a snowball approach was implemented to locate these participants. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest a snowball approach as a useful method for creating a sample group for interviewing, especially when the population segments are difficult to locate. In this study, the snowball sample was based off of referrals from others.

I was initially able to contact a few individuals from my workplace for this study. Since I personally know three compulsive talkers in my workplace I was able to contact various coworkers for my study, including Ralph and John. Upon doing my interview, Ralph was discussing my topic with someone at a local advertising

agency. This individual, Ryan, mentioned how they currently had two compulsive talkers in their workplace and he would be happy to participate. After interviewing Ryan, he put me in contact with Sheryl, who works closely with the second compulsive talker in their workplace.

At one point, I worked with Bill closely and knew of his struggles with a compulsive talker at his university. Therefore, I contacted him directly to gauge his interest for an interview.

My wife also worked with a compulsive talker. She asked a few acquaintances, including Phillip, if they would be willing to be interviewed for this study. Phillip agreed to an interview and passed along the name of Denise as another potential participant. Since Denise sat closely to the compulsive talker in Phillip's example, he felt she would be a good candidate for the study. Denise also accepted the invitation, so I contacted her to set up an interview. She also mentioned my study to a friend of hers at another branch. Denise was then able to put me in contact with Maddy, and the interview occurred shortly after.

Through my relationships within the university, a couple of individuals sent out emails to their students and friends to gauge interest in this study. A professor within the university passed along a few individuals, and from those contacts I was able to interview JoAnne and Harry. A classmate of mine heard about the study and distributed an email to a group of her friends within the armed forces. From there, I received several leads including Mick, Jane, and Michelle. Another classmate of mine, Tracy, mentioned after class one day that she worked very closely with a

compulsive talker. We were able to set up an interview shortly after that discussion.

The key to these interviews was determining whether the individual being interviewed was discussing a compulsive talker or not. I was looking for individuals who worked with compulsive talkers; therefore, the goal was that each example of a compulsive talking individual fit McCroskey and Richmond's definition of a compulsive talker. This was determined by the author when initial contact was made to schedule the interviews.

I essentially looked for two out of the four key criteria that McCroskey and Richmond observed within compulsive talkers. These two criteria, demonstrating compulsive talking behavior and taking communication too far, were gathered by asking the participant to describe the compulsive talker. This technique proved useful in helping identify whether these two characteristics were evident in the person being discussed. Furthermore, to determine whether the compulsive talker was aware of their behavior I simply would ask "Is this person aware of the fact that they talk a lot?" Since many of these people only work with the compulsive talker, it was difficult to determine whether the compulsive talker's behavior was noticeable across other situations.

Contact was made with the employees to set up a convenient time to conduct the interview after the initial assessment. They were instructed that this interview was completely voluntary and consent for their participation was required and needed to be granted both verbally and in writing. A consent form was provided either at the time of the face to face interview, or via the mail prior to the telephone interviews.

Each form was signed by both the participant and me. While the intent was to conduct the interviews in person, a few had to be completed over the telephone. This change in strategy was due to the fact that I relocated to a different city within the country midway through the data collection process, therefore making in-person interviews difficult to accomplish. Fortunately, only one of the scheduled interviews needed to be cancelled as a result of the relocation bringing my total from 15 to 14 interviews.

Analysis

Before beginning to analyze the data, each individual interview was reviewed six times. I held the initial interview and immediately reviewed my notes to insure nothing was overlooked. After that step was completed, I transcribed the tapes within 24 hours of the initial interview. Once the transcriptions were finished, I read each of the interviews closely four times.

For this study, no data analysis software was used. Instead, the analyzing and interpretation of the data occurred through Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) analytic procedures. The idea was to look for categories that could be created from the data and identify similar concepts by reducing the data. These concepts helped determine relevant linkages within the interview transcripts. From coding, the process moves to interpreting the categories and producing meaningful data. This involves looking for patterns as well as contrasts in the findings.

Creswell (2003) identified six steps to help guide a researcher through the analysis process. The first was to begin organizing the data in order to start the

process. Therefore, all of the interview notes and transcriptions needed to take place prior to any other steps. Once the notes were collected and typed up, the next step in the process was reading the data. Creswell mentioned the researcher's need to get a "general sense of the information" from the collected data (p. 191).

Step three in the process was to code the data. With 14 interviews, the goal was to reduce and prioritize the data. As Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggested, a lot of the data that were collected would more than likely go unused during the coding process. Through this reduction a certain development of the concepts began. Reducing the data was useful in helping "shape the data" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 211).

The next step included finding the actual categories or themes that were discovered in the data, but also keeping these themes to an overall small number. The next decision was to have the words and examples from the participants help tell the story throughout this study. The participants provided a very detailed discussion on compulsive talkers in the workplace. With their stories, the report was much richer and interesting, allowing for a deeper understanding of their issues and perceptions. This narrative also allowed the breaking down of certain categories into sub-themes. This step allows for the opportunity to provide insight into the data while also asking questions about future research and studies.

Chapter Four: Results

The 14 participants each described their interactions with compulsive talkers in depth, detailing examples of over talking and the ways they coped with this behavior. Quite often these participants exclaimed that interacting with a compulsive talker could be "torture," "annoying," "stressful," a "big waste of time," and "totally dreadful." However, many of those interviewed saw these same people as "pleasant," "nice," and "very intelligent." I identified four distinct patterns. First, I will discuss how compulsive talkers were perceived quite differently depending on the situation. Second, I will discuss what compulsive talkers talk about during conversations. The participants felt that compulsive talkers generally discussed anything, whether the topic was work related or not. These topics or stories tended to be repeated quite frequently, with many of the participants hearing the same stories over and over. Third, I will discuss how each participant described their methods for coping with the discussions, including stopping the conversation or avoiding the interaction all together. Finally, I will discuss the participant's perceptions of the negative impact compulsive talkers have on the workplace.

General Perceptions

Overall, respondents initially considered the compulsive talker who they worked with to be relatively nice and believed that their intentions are good. Many perceived that these people had low self-esteem and attempted to fill their lives with chatter in order to make themselves feel better. Others commented that they viewed these people as their friends, but their perceptions dramatically changed over the

course of time. According to the participants, the constant communication by their compulsive talking colleagues got in the way of their relationship and forced them to rethink their friendship.

Respondents, including Maddy, Harry, Mick, Phillip, John, Michelle, Sheryl, and Bill, perceived their compulsive talker at work as nice or friendly. Phillip explained how he does not have a bad opinion of his compulsive talker. He thought she had good qualities and meant well, but her need for talk had gotten to the point where she had to be in total control of any conversation that was occurring. While he did not "dislike her in any way, shape or form," he found listening to her frustrating. John also commented on the fact that his compulsive talker was a nice person. On the other hand, John constantly felt this person was "teaching class" in a way that left him feeling as if he was being lectured. Furthermore, Michelle perceived her compulsive talking coworker as a good person and good worker who many in the work place liked. She did mention feeling sympathy for the person in the sense that because of his unawareness he would not achieve the success in business that he could. Michelle said, "There are very few things I would fix about him, except for this (compulsive talking)." Sheryl also spoke highly of her compulsive talker. She ultimately found this individual as very trustworthy with a great heart. She went on to mention how this individual would be a great car trip person due to their talkative nature. "La, la, la, la, la and we're here! It's a Seinfeld episode."

Ralph thought his compulsive talker was very smart and well read, but his behavior suggested he may be socially uncomfortable. "He just can't sit back and

listen," Ralph said. "He has to have his two cents in every conversation. If someone

brings up a story about talking dogs, he (the compulsive talker) has a story even better

than that."

For others, their opinion of the compulsive talker changed over time. Initially,

JoAnne mentioned how her coworker's talk did not "annoy her as much early on."

She perceived this person to be really nice in the beginning and believed the talkative

behavior and frequent visits were due to the close relationship they had at work. At

one point JoAnne began developing a friendship with her coworker. Soon, however,

JoAnne began noticing that she was unable to get her work done when the

compulsive talker was around. She frequently witnessed this compulsive talker

immediately leaving her area to spend time talking to someone else about the same

things. JoAnne figured that the compulsive talker was "rarely at her desk working"

because that individual would constantly wander the halls at work talking to people.

She began to realize that her friend's excessive talk was contributing to an overall

poor work ethic. When JoAnne would later interact with this compulsive talker her

thoughts would turn to, "Great, how long am I going to have to sit here and listen to

her talk? How am I going to get away with not having to talk to her?" She

mentioned that she no longer considers the compulsive talker a friend due to their

lack of positive interactions.

Bill was also initially impressed with the compulsive talker. The interactions

always seemed friendly, and he believed the compulsive talker was quite intelligent.

Over time though, he began noticing the "chips in the armor" and that he was not "as

sharp as he pretended that he was." The conversations led Bill to believe that the coworker was not as well rounded of an individual as he initially thought. Mick's opinion also changed severely over time. Mick once viewed his compulsive talker as "skilled, proficient, and competent." Now, however, his perception changed to the complete opposite. He has become increasingly frustrated with his talkativeness, especially because he has heard these same stories repeatedly.

Throughout the course of knowing these compulsive talkers, many of the participant's initial perceptions had changed. In some cases their perceptions altered drastically once they realized the conversations were extremely one-sided. The respondents noticed the topics of the conversations generally were about the compulsive talkers themselves. Topics rarely focused on anything other than what the compulsive talker wanted to discuss.

What they talk about

Everything Non-Work Related

All of the participants mentioned that the compulsive talkers they work with can discuss a wide range of topics. These compulsive talkers seemed to flow from one topic to the next with the ability to discuss anything with relative ease. The topics that compulsive talkers discussed with their participants ranged from the highly personal, to daily news events and everything else in between. One consistent pattern emerged: compulsive talkers often began the conversations with work related items that quickly moved on to other subject matter.

Each of the compulsive talkers used strategies to begin these conversations, often starting the conversations with work topics. Harry found his compulsive talker would get his foot in the door by discussing work and then quickly change direction by talking about sports to "minute facts that he found interesting in the newspaper this morning." Harry believed his compulsive talker did a good job attempting to connect with the other participant's interests. "He isn't self centered," Harry said. The conversations usually began with a work story of common interest, for example what happened yesterday in their department. After that, Harry felt the compulsive talker would change topics and control 90 to 95 percent of the entire conversation. At first Harry would become engaged in the conversation because of the departmental content, but his attention quickly wandered when the conversation flowed to non-work related topics.

Others experienced similar situations. Bill's compulsive talker had the ability to talk about items that other people in the group had interest in, typically leading the discussion with a business topic. The compulsive talker would begin the conversation so he appeared knowledgeable about business subject matter, but soon there was little quiet time. "He doesn't know about Paul Harvey and meaningful pauses," Bill said. Jane also mentioned that her conversations with compulsive talkers could be about anything, but typically started with work information. Whether current events, the stock market, or social concerns, the conversation would quickly transform from work topics to other items. Jane discussed how this individual could go on and on about any topic brought up within a conversation, but typically without

any great substance. Michelle echoed Jane's perception. Her compulsive talker would talk about his adventures in skiing, his plans for the weekend, or specific gossip around the office. The compulsive talker essentially provided Michelle with his to-do list for the day every day.

Maddy mentioned her compulsive talker's conversations ranged from the weather, her children, her customers, and her spouse. "75 to 80 percent isn't critical to anything business related" she said. Ryan's compulsive talker would discuss everything, even items with which he was not directly involved. Because the compulsive talker felt the need to take part in every conversation, Ryan felt his compulsive talker would put the issue behind further. The compulsive talker would take up precious time discussing the issue which took time away from Ryan to solve the problem. He believed the compulsive talker would shift the focus of the conversation from important business needs to less critical information which ultimately delayed resolution.

"The compulsive talker just talks about inane stuff," Ralph said. He felt that everything could be a topic with the compulsive talker. This individual would quickly change the discussion with no "real rhyme or reason just to continue to talk." "Sometimes even work related stuff, but not very often," Ralph said. Often the topics of politics and history would replace these work related conversations, as the compulsive talker would provide a little bit of history on the subject that was being discussed. These conversations consistently began with work related topics, but

quickly transitioned to these broader topics. According to Ralph, this activity occurred "over and over" and very frequently.

The exception to this pattern was Phillip. His compulsive talker discussed mostly work related items. Usually the topic was anything that could be answered in a short amount of time, but he would receive a "15 minute dissertation on why they should be doing something." At times the topic would deviate, but the majority of time the topic was work related.

Since the participant's interests were piqued with work related topics, the compulsive talkers hooked their audience in and quickly moved on. While sports, news, politics, and current events often were the topic of conversation, one topic in particular received the most attention: the compulsive talker themselves.

Personal Items

The overall feeling of the participants was that the compulsive talkers generally talked about themselves the most. These conversations ranged from deeply personal family matters to how their drive was on the way to work that morning. Tracy noticed that her compulsive talker "can talk about almost anything for hours," but typically talks about other family members she does not know. Since they live in the same neighborhood, the compulsive talker had the tendency to treat Tracy as if she knew all of her relatives personally. Sarah shared the same experiences. Her compulsive talker centered her conversations on friends and relatives in much the same way. Sarah would become frustrated because she often had no idea who these people were, which generally required her to listen instead of talk.

"For whatever reason, they talk about these things in a very dramatic way," Sheryl discussed. She mentioned that her compulsive talker only talks about himself. Even when the topic was current events, the compulsive talker would steer the conversation towards how these events were impacting his own life. "Everything is about pretty much the world ending," Sheryl said. She would often introduce the compulsive talker to her clients to keep them entertained while they waited in the lobby. The perception, however, was that the conversations were always one-sided and revolved entirely around the compulsive talker. "Not in a sleazy, gross way. It's almost as if they are excited about their own life," she mentioned.

Similar to Sheryl's experience, JoAnne noticed the conversation was always steered towards the compulsive talker. JoAnne found her compulsive talker discussing items that are "95% of the time un-work related unless you include discussions surrounding gossip about the company." Typically though, the topic of conversation included her family, personal information and "why she is mad at her husband." Maddy explained how her compulsive talking employee talked about what happened in the morning on the way to work, or what happened during the previous night. Whatever the focus of the conversation, it was typically about the compulsive talker.

John and Ralph would become uncomfortable at the amount of personal information their compulsive talkers would discuss with them. These individuals would hear in depth stories about the compulsive talker's personal life. Therefore,

they both felt this information to be too personal for someone with whom they essentially had only a working relationship.

Same Story

Quite frequently, the participants observed their compulsive talker discussing the same topic over and over. Mick mentioned how he would hear the same stories, typically home life topics or past experiences, without much deviation. He became so accustomed to hearing the stories that he could recite the monologue verbatim. Mick believed his compulsive talking coworker reduced his morale and spirit. He attributed this decline to the constant conversations about the same topic every day. Recently, the same conversation still would be brought up even when he mentioned how he has heard this story before. In Tracy's experience the compulsive talker repeats herself on the same topic two or three times. A typical three to five minute conversation becomes 20 minutes in length with this compulsive talker, because the person got "stuck in a groove like a broken record."

For Denise, her compulsive talker also discussed the same personal issues with great frequency. Once he told the story to Denise, this compulsive talker would move further down the hall in order to tell the same story to the next person in line. Denise even witnessed this individual frequently calling people the same day to talk about the same story over and over again. Denise felt strongly about being at work to work, and that side conversations should be kept to a minimum. The compulsive talker she worked with would also talk about the same stories. Denise mentioned that these stories are something she "has already heard four times that day." Tracy

perceived her compulsive talker as possessing a "continual stream of verbiage" without taking a moment to pause for a breath.

Whether the conversations were started with a work related topic or not, the participants agreed that the discussions would quickly transform to a variety of different topics. The compulsive talkers' ability to move from one topic to the next, especially when the topic was about their personal life, was witnessed frequently by the respondents. The repetitive nature of the topics quickly became the source of frustration to those who had heard the conversation several times. Because of this growing frustration, the participants began to develop ways of dealing with the behavior in order to make it through their work day.

Coping Strategies

All the participants discussed some form of coping with their compulsive talker's behavior, whether it required totally avoiding the compulsive talker, making up fake meetings, or generally typing away at their computer while the person talked. These tactics broke down into three areas: avoiding the compulsive talker, attempting to stop the conversation, and creating excuses to end the interaction. Almost all participants tried to not engage in the conversation, but once the discussion started it usually forced them to not talk in order to wrap it up more quickly. When that tactic did not work the participants began working, typing, or shuffling papers to give the compulsive talker a hint that they are busy. Making up excuses, typically bathroom breaks or fake meetings, became the next step in the process of ending the

conversation. Eventually, the interaction resulted in the participant physically walking out of the conversation and heading to their next appointment.

Avoiding the Conversation

Because these compulsive talkers were coworkers, many of the participants preferred to create excuses or continue working to avoid the conversation without being rude. Many of those interviewed thought avoiding a compulsive talker was very rude and a tactic they often tried hard to avoid implementing. For example, Phillip could not avoid his compulsive talker because he needed to talk with her daily in order to accomplish his tasks. Even though he saw her phone number on the caller ID, he had to proceed with the contact so his customer's issues would be resolved.

On the other hand, those who did avoid contact with their compulsive talker said they did so only to save themselves time. Tracy would avoid the phone call if she saw the name on the caller ID. Instead, she would call back at a time when she knew the compulsive talker would not be at her desk. Tracy was responsible for dropping off various work tasks after hours, and even began readjusting her route to drop these items off when the compulsive talker was not at home or was sleeping.

When Jane heard her compulsive talker coming down the hall she would get up and shut the door in an attempt to not listen. This did not necessarily stop the compulsive talker from eventually knocking on her door, but it did allow Jane some time to focus on her work before the interaction began. Ryan would avoid his compulsive talker as much as possible by walking the other way. While he would typically be cordial and polite, his overall dislike for the compulsive talker continued

to grow. "In my 20 years of being in the working world, he is probably the most difficult person I've had to work with. I have to walk away for my own health and sanity," he said.

Maddy simply tried to not interact with the compulsive talker if she did not have a lot of time. While this worked, the compulsive talker was her employee so completely avoiding her was not a possibility. Instead, Maddy tried to appear as if she had someplace else to go. Other participants found themselves readjusting their walking patterns throughout the building. For many months, Ralph would walk through another area of the building separate from where the compulsive talker worked. He completely changed the way he traveled through the building in order to avoid engaging in conversation with him. Michelle would also spend a lot of time trying to determine how to reduce the amount of interaction. This avoidance often led to locating two areas of the building where she could have uninterrupted time to work.

While avoiding the conversation proved to be useful to some participants, other participants were not comfortable with creating ways of dodging the interaction. Therefore, when avoidance was not a possible solution, the respondents found themselves face to face with the compulsive talker. Soon, they were looking for ways to stop the conversation with the compulsive talker and move on towards their next task.

Ending the Conversation

At first, the participants in this study attempted to be polite and behave in terms they deemed appropriate behavior. Typically, this type of behavior only prolonged the conversation, so the participants began to create ways to help end the conversation. These tactics, including nonverbal and verbal signals of leaving the situation, were implemented using a variety of techniques.

Signals. Ralph's encounters with compulsive talkers usually followed the same pattern. The compulsive talker would begin the conversation and quickly explain the topic in great detail. Ralph infrequently got a word in edgewise and anything he would say would just "prolong the torture even further." Eventually Ralph would try to stop talking in order to end the conversation, or he would explain to the compulsive talker that he needed to get something done for work.

Tracy would frequently grow very quiet during the interactions, because she felt the compulsive talker could be so dominating throughout the conversation. When Tracy realized it was time to leave the situation, she would then become very assertive in order to end the discussion. Sometimes Tracy had to be extremely blunt to shut off the conversation. She would hold her hand up in front of her face to indicate that she did not have any more time for that conversation. When this attempt failed, she resorted to fleeing the situation any way possible. She even turned her car on and backed out of the driveway once while the compulsive talker was still talking.

Mick preferred to use a more subtle approach to ending the conversation, but he often resorted to being very blunt. Mick explained how he became good at

showing his disinterest by avoiding eye contact or keeping his responses very quick and to the point. He would try to move the conversation to a close through these signals so the compulsive talker could save face. He usually found this worked well, but at times he would need to be assertive. For example, Mick would ask very pointed questions to signal the end of the conversation, like, "Look you've told me this before. Why do you need to tell me over and over again?" While he had confronted the situation directly in hopes of changing the compulsive talker, he soon realized, "This is who he is and this is how he wants to communicate and that is all there is to it." Maddy developed a series of staged signals in order to end the conversation. First, she attempted to keep the compulsive talker on task by discussing work related topics. Next, Maddy would keep her answers very short without trying to appear rude, because "if I don't they will never leave my office." She would try "these little things first," but would then begin typing on the computer, or grabbing a notepad to start writing down ideas. Finally, when none of the other steps proved useful, she would make up another appointment and eventually stand up and walk out of the room. Unfortunately, the compulsive talker usually followed her to her next appointment.

On the other hand, Denise believed she "puts off a vibe that is probably rude." Her signal included repeating frequently that she must get back to work. She also did not engage in eye-contact with the individual and focused her attention on other tasks.

Harry's situation depended on how busy he was at the time. When he was busy he would get quite frustrated and just begin working while the compulsive talker

chatted. Eventually, the compulsive talker would take his nonverbal cues and leave the room. "I feel really bad about that," Harry said, "but it really seems to be the gentle way to do it."

In general, Jane would try and avoid eye contact as much as possible. She would remain seated at her desk and would not invite them to take a seat. When that would not work, which was quite often, she began asking pointed questions to keep the conversation on task. Eventually she resorted to cutting the compulsive talker off and going back to her work. "I have basically just told them I don't want to talk about this anymore and walked away," she said. "If it is getting bad, I usually just cut (them) off and say, 'Well, I've had enough for today'."

Phillip also tried numerous approaches to ending conversations. He would ask "yes" or "no" questions, become obviously agitated in his short responses, and kept his responses to a minimum so the conversation would not be prolonged. His conversations took place mostly over the phone, so the compulsive talker could not see his nonverbal cues. These conversations reduced him to shaking his head or caused him to look around to those near him as if to say "why is this conversation taking so long." Like many of the other participants, Phillip eventually created reasons for the conversation to end.

Sheryl preferred to be silent throughout most of the conversation. The compulsive talker's office was located not far from Sheryl's, therefore she found herself frequently sitting at her desk listening to the conversations. Her communication became reduced to saying "Oh," or simply nodding her head in

agreement. If she would say anything it would only continue the conversation. Sheryl would not intentionally try to avoid the compulsive talker, but if this person approached her with what she considered to be a lukewarm problem that might be easily resolved she would intentionally be very non-reactionary or non-sympathetic. Like many of the other participants, walking away from the conversation generally worked the best, because this compulsive talker would continue to talk "as long as there are eyes and ears."

Denise also did not talk much during the conversation, keeping her answers short and brief. She found that the more she answered the longer the conversation would go. She felt strongly when she was at work it was time to focus on work. On the average Denise suggested that the conversations were "about 90% of her talking and about 10% me." Therefore, she avoided the discussion by continuing to type, write, shuffle papers, or doing office work while the compulsive talker continues her discussion.

Bill usually attempted to cut to the chase of what really needed to be discussed. He tried to end the conversation eventually, especially once the topic had been addressed several times. Bill tried to give that person the same dignity and respect as anyone else, but tried to limit interaction.

JoAnne also gave signals to stop the conversation. Essentially she attempted to look busy without coming out and just saying so. JoAnne usually nodded her head during the conversation while internally hoping the conversation would end soon. She also would try to give non-verbal cues, including turning her back to the

compulsive talker or typing on her computer. She believed this type of action would make her appear to be busy and give a signal that the conversation needed to come to an end quickly. Ryan would make his responses short and limited, or would not ask any questions. He too would eventually have to walk away. John tried a different approach by pawning the compulsive talker off on his office mate. When that option was not available, he would attempt to keep his responses to a minimum or try and shift the discussion to work related items.

Leaving the scene. Often times the above attempts to stop the conversation failed. The participants in this study would try very hard to stop the conversations from continuing by using a multitude of different tactics and approaches. When those tactics proved ineffective, the respondents resorted to making up reasons for the conversation to end. The stories, reasons, or fabrications ranged from false meetings to numerous smoking breaks. There were three primary excuses consistently used by the participants: restroom breaks, smoking breaks, and fake meetings.

Jane admitted to being very rude at times. She found the best way to end the conversation was to get up and walk away. When she was over at the other building Jane would ask another female in the office to go to the bathroom with her.

Mick would make it a point to go out for a smoke break or a bathroom break. Michelle also found this technique to work the best. She often told her compulsive talker that she did not want to talk about this topic anymore. Michelle also used the bathroom as a reason to end the conversation quicker.

Running to the restroom ranked second to the number of participants who go on smoke breaks to avoid talking to the compulsive talker. Michelle used the need to go on a smoking break quite frequently. On several occasions, she had come back from one break only to find the compulsive talker waiting to end the conversation. Once he started "on a tangent again," Michelle would wait for somebody to walk by on their smoke break so she could go with them.

Other excuses included Ralph frequently saying, "Hey, I gotta run," or, "I've got to finish this up." Bill developed excuses, such as a pending meeting he was running late for in order to put an end to the conversation.

In some extreme instances, even these creative excuses did not help the situation. Certain participants had to take action in order to put an end to the constant interaction with the compulsive talker. JoAnne tried several of the above excuses in order to stop these conversations. She would pretend to have to go to the bathroom, or answer a phone call with the compulsive talker in the office, or invent a nonexistent meeting. Whatever the excuse, the compulsive talker would begin catching on to the pattern and follow her to her next location. JoAnne quickly moved on to finding a way to physically leave the desk area. Eventually JoAnne resorted to requesting a change of office to avoid her compulsive talker. When her office was preparing to relocate to another part of the building, JoAnne asked her boss if she could have her desk moved away from the talker. Until the actual move took place, JoAnne requested a laptop so she could easily go find another place to work on

projects and email. She also would reserve a conference room when she needed time to concentrate.

Harry's coworkers utilized a tag team type of approach. While his compulsive talker usually amused him, Harry would often resort to using his other coworkers to end the conversation. "He really can go on for a half hour or more if you don't send any signals," Harry said. Therefore, each coworker would call each other, or in their words "rescue", when they heard the compulsive talker in the hall. "If he is in my colleague's office I just telephone and say 'did you need to be rescued?' and that will help."

The respondents used various techniques to aid in ending the conversations. By developing various excuses, such as bathroom or smoking breaks, the participants could end the conversation quickly without appearing rude to the compulsive talker. Other methods were more extreme, including moving desks or changing work hours. These types of actions lead to the question of what type of effect do compulsive talkers have on their coworkers.

Impact on workplace

My study strongly suggests the compulsive talker was perceived to negatively impact the work of those with whom they interacted. Most respondents believed the compulsive talker took away precious time from their work schedule, from those around them, and also put the compulsive talker's work further behind schedule. There was a certain minority of participants who viewed compulsive talkers as

entertaining or even necessary for the company. Overall though, the respondents were angry and frustrated by their experiences with compulsive talkers in the workplace.

While Harry perceived his compulsive talker as a mild source of frustration when busy, the department generally found the talker amusing. In fact, the compulsive talker developed a reputation for talking all around work. "He just loves to talk. Just anybody he sees he will strike up a conversation and if it continues it continues," Harry said. The individual was respected in his field of work and the talkative behavior did not hinder productivity. Yet, Harry's coworkers would become so annoyed with the behavior that they created the tag team method to get the compulsive talker out of their offices. Bill perceived compulsive talkers in the workplace to be "a necessary evil." He did not think an organization would be as strong without compulsive talkers because they would "help balance out personalities."

On the other hand, Maddy's compulsive talker reported directly to her and was constantly coached on her talkative behavior. Every time Maddy encountered her employee she would be trapped in non stop conversation. Meanwhile, the stacks of paper continued to pile up on her employee's desk. The other people on Maddy's team attempted to not sit by this individual during meetings or even tried to avoid the meeting. The compulsive talker would often change the direction of the meeting by bringing up another topic, which in turn would waste a lot of time.

In the past, Tracy hired a compulsive talker to do graphic design work. The talkative individual became so problematic that even the president of the division

noticed a decline in productivity. He would avoid the marketing department altogether. The president said he did not have the time to get "cornered" by the compulsive talker, as the discussion would take several minutes of the day. Tracy asked the employee to "stay focused on your work" and commented on how, "You are really friendly, but you are talking too much." The employee understood, but explained that, "I've always been that way." The behavior never changed and according to Tracy, the former employee's attempts to land another job remained unsuccessful. The compulsive talker switched to working from her home doing graphic design work on a freelance basis. Tracy still works closely with the compulsive talker.

Many of the participants commented on the amount of time the compulsive talker wasted from their work week. For example, John insisted his productivity took a hit and he would typically lose a minimum of an hour a week listening to this individual. Michelle was spending additional hours at work and at home to make up for the change in her productivity. She frequently readjusted her work schedule in order to work on projects while the compulsive talker was out of the office. Michelle's "normal" work hours were between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. She would frequently come in an hour early to begin her day, often due to the fact that she would lose that hour sometime during the day listening to the compulsive talker. When coming in earlier no longer worked she eventually switched to staying later. She has switched back to her "normal" shift and is taking her unattended work home instead.

Phillip typically prepared himself for "ten minutes of rambling discussion" when his phone would ring. His initial thought when confronted was a conversation that should take five seconds to complete typically took several minutes. Meanwhile his thoughts would focus on the lost productivity and the fact that he could have been working on something more productive. These conversations allowed him fewer opportunities to spend on more pressing tasks. Furthermore, when Phillip would complete the phone call he became quite frustrated which usually carried over to the next person with whom he talked.

Finally, Ralph spent a lot of time worrying that the compulsive talker would "come in and eat up all of my time." While he tried not to be rude to people, Ralph was becoming increasingly concerned that the constant interaction would ruin his productivity.

Those interviewed found the workplace to be much more productive when the compulsive talker was out of the office. Denise perceived this talkative behavior affected everyone who worked around the compulsive talker. The constant interaction caused her and her coworkers to be unable to get work done, and resulted in a decline in Denise's productivity. The workforce became more productive when the compulsive talker was actually not at work. On one occasion, the compulsive talker missed a few days of work due to a sore tooth. Denise "flew through her work." Other employees approached Denise to mention how the work environment around the office was ideal, "because so-and-so isn't around here." Because the compulsive talker treated every situation as if it were a crisis, Denise felt the entire

work group would like the person to "shut up." People actually emailed Denise during the day poking fun at the compulsive talker and wishing the person would simply stop talking.

Sheryl experienced similar results when her compulsive talker was out of the office. "When this person is not around the office it is really quiet," she mentioned. Furthermore, "When this person is not at work other people say, 'Oh my gosh, I get so much work done when they are not there' because this person engages whoever is around them."

A few of the participants believe the compulsive talkers should be fired due to their detriment to the team. They felt their talkative behavior took so much away from productivity that the company would be better off without them. Ryan perceived his compulsive talker as a passive-aggressive personality who prevented the others within the company from doing what they needed to do in order to achieve results. He essentially grew tired of working with this person and "can't wait for him to be fired." JoAnne's compulsive talker made it very distracting and difficult to get work done. Jane pleaded for someone to "please take them away." She believed her compulsive talkers (she worked with two) had an overall negative impact on morale and efficiency. Jane found them to be "total time wasters" and not team players. She felt they always had the need to be heard and took away from everyone else who worked in their department.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Throughout this study, the participants became very passionate when discussing their interactions with compulsive talkers. Finding people to interview for this study did prove challenging, but once they were located the respondents were very willing to discuss their perceptions and had very strong reactions to compulsive talkers. They often continued the conversation long after the interview questions were over. In fact, many of these conversations stretched to an hour as the participants finally found an outlet for their frustrations. Some even commented that this was a therapy session that allowed them to finally speak their minds about their everyday struggles with compulsive talkers.

The main cause for their frustration is spending every day at work coping with compulsive talkers. Whether they give them nonverbal cues or create elaborate ways to avoid these individuals, one thing is clear: these participants are angry and annoyed with compulsive talkers. It appears that compulsive talkers in the workplace are a problem that needs to be dealt with. The participants in this study are asking for help and need guidance in order to deal with the compulsive talkers who they work with.

At the end of Jane's interview, she pleads for someone to "please take them (compulsive talkers) away." A response such as this sums up the overall perception of compulsive talkers by these participants. In certain extreme instances, participants are looking forward to the compulsive talker being fired from their positions. Imagine wanting someone fired from the workplace so badly because of the amount of time they spend talking at work. Ryan's voice became noticeably excited while he

was discussing the possibility that his compulsive talking coworker could be fired. He is looking forward to this happening simply because he cannot tolerate this behavior anymore. These types of responses reflect the frustration and annoyance of those who work with compulsive talking individuals everyday. In order to cope with their behavior, coworkers resort to lying, hiding, and adapting to simply make it through the day. This behavior often makes the respondents uncomfortable, but they feel it is necessary in order to manage their workload more effectively. Actually adjusting their work schedules around an individual who cannot stop talking, or requesting a change of cubicle, represents a sampling of the negative impact compulsive talkers have on the workplace.

Therefore, I am able to determine three conclusions from the collected data. First, the behavior of the compulsive talker is problematic even though they think otherwise. Compulsive talkers are annoying those around them and are harmful to the workplace. Second, McCroskey and Richmond's (1993) earlier assessment on quantity versus quality is not entirely accurate. The evidence in this study suggests that there is not only a quantity issue with their communication, but also a quality issue. Finally, it is essential and crucial that we begin looking for ways to intervene to help these over-talkers overcome their compulsive behavior.

During this study, certain findings question some of McCroskey and Richmond's early assessments of compulsive talkers. For example, in McCroskey and Richmond's 1995 study the compulsive talking participants mention how their talkative behavior is not problematic. In fact, the participants in their study are not

convinced that their compulsive talking behavior is damaging to themselves.

Furthermore, some of the compulsive talking participants themselves state in

McCroskey and Richmond's study how they "resent that anyone would even consider

that to be a possibility" (1995, p. 49). Compulsive talkers may be aware that they like

to talk, but they obviously do not understand how damaging their compulsive

behavior can be. In this present study, most of the participants find this behavior

extremely distracting and damaging to the workplace. This study should actually

come as a surprise to compulsive talkers as those interviewees feel very negatively

about their behavior. While the participants provide examples that the compulsive

talkers in this study are very aware of their talkative behavior, the respondents

believed the compulsive talker does not view their behavior as having a negative

impact. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents themselves perceive this

talkativeness very negatively. In fact, it is interesting how many of these respondents

saw their perceptions change from positive to negative over time. After a while, the

once friendly relationship would morph and the participants began to react in negative

ways when they were forced to interact with the compulsive talker. Now they will

hide in their offices, avoid eye contact or continue working while the compulsive

talkers continue talking excessively. Participants mention that a compulsive talker

could never advance within the company because of the negative perceptions that

many people have about that individual.

More importantly, the results of this study show that there is also a quality

issue with this behavior and not just a quantity issue. As a reminder, McCroskey and

Richmond (1993) believe compulsive talking is a quantity issue and not a quality issue. The compulsive behavior is based on the amount of talk, or the quantity of talk. Therefore, according to the authors, the issue with compulsive talkers is their quantity of talk and not the fact that they are unable to communicate effectively. Remember that McCroskey and Richmond suggest that a compulsive talker is more likely "an outgoing, probably skilled and effective, communicator" (1995, p. 47). McCroskey and Richmond are adamant that people who "talk too much" and compulsive talkers are truly different people because of this quality versus quantity assessment. They attribute "talking too much" to not liking what a person has to say, the quality of the discussion, or the actual "nature of the communication to which we object" (p. 50).

In contrast to McCroskey and Richmond, my study suggests that there are both quality and quantity issues with compulsive talkers. Certainly it is obvious from the respondents that compulsive talkers have a quantity issue because of their constant need for conversation. They talk nonstop and in large amounts. However, in every interview the participant displays dissatisfaction with the way the compulsive talker communicates overall. This is beyond the pure fact that they talk all the time, all day long.

Based on my findings, compulsive talking is a quality issue for three reasons. One, the compulsive talkers completely ignore cues. They continue to talk even when the other participants begin showing signs of frustration. Second, compulsive talkers do not allow the other individuals the opportunity to take turns during the discussion. Finally, they tend to repeat the same stories over and over again to the

same people, talk about themselves repeatedly, and switch the conversation away from work topics. Therefore, whether the compulsive talkers are avoiding non-verbal cues, or completely ignoring the turn taking opportunities within a conversation, the fact remains that the participants are also frustrated with the quality of the compulsive talker's content and communication abilities as well.

It appears that compulsive talkers lack understanding surrounding nonverbal and verbal cues. Apparently, participants in this study become frustrated over the fact that compulsive talkers ignore nonverbal and verbal cues to end the conversation. It became obvious that the participants had a tendency to become very annoyed with the compulsive talker. Therefore, they resorted to coping with the behavior in order to make it through the work day. When asked how to stop the conversation, the respondents mention their use of non-verbal and verbal cues as being fairly ineffective. In fact, many of the compulsive talkers do not respond to these first attempts to end the conversation. People in this study would continue working, minimize eye contact and usually say very little in order to keep the conversations shorter. The participants do their best to end the conversation without making the compulsive talker feel awkward or insulted. In most cases these attempts to end the discussion, and many others, did not work. How can a compulsive talker be so oblivious to the fact that people begin working on projects while the compulsive talker sits in their office? In Harry's example, the compulsive talker leaves and then returns immediately after to start up a new conversation. Harry just keeps on working; but that does not seem to matter to the compulsive talker. Often, the

participant opts to become abrasive, but that also proves to have very little impact on ending the conversation. When these tactics do not work, and this is frequently, the participants resort to other strategies. Ultimately, stopping compulsive talkers from talking usually requires the use of extreme tactics, such as making up nonexistent meetings or avoiding bumping into them in the hallway. No matter the tactic, the results show that compulsive talkers once again lack basic communication skills.

These compulsive talkers also totally overlook the concept of turn taking during conversations. Wiemann and Knapp's 1975 article on turn taking suggests how an individual could dominate a conversation and be perceived as a "bore" by the other participants, especially if the other individuals have something to say but never have the opportunity to say it (p. 79). "The way in which this ritual is managed by one interactant will affect the judgments made about him or her by the other interactant" (Wiemann & Knapp, 1975, p.91). What the authors are concluding is if one person truly dominates the conversation then it is quite possible the other participant's assessment of that individual will be negative. In the case of the compulsive talkers in this study, the interviewees will frequently become bored with the conversation and look for ways to get out of the situation. Wiemann and Knapp also question whether it is "these behaviors that determine whether or not we are successful interactants" (1975, p. 91). Certainly avoiding turn taking in conversations can be considered a quality issue.

McCroskey and Richmond (1993) also believe the topic of the conversation represents a quality issue. They suggest that a person who talks too much may

become labeled as such due to the topics they discuss during their conversations. In this study, the participants find the conversations often move from one topic to another. One exception is the compulsive talker's need to mention every detail of their personal lives. Those interviewed become annoyed very easily after hearing stories about the friends and family of the compulsive talker. The compulsive talkers will discuss these individuals as if the other participant knows them personally. In most cases, the participants have no idea who these friends or family are and are forced to listen to story after story about these people. The annoyance was also brought upon by the overall frequency with which the compulsive talkers talked about these people. Every day coworkers expect to hear about what happened in the neighborhood, or what happened the night before at home. The people identified throughout this study simply talk nonstop, but do so while talking about items that do, not matter to the other participant.

Furthermore, according to the participants a compulsive talker has a tendency to talk about the same stories over and over again. One issue mentioned during several of the interviews is the idea that the compulsive talker would repeat the same topics again and again. Mick suggests that he can easily recite these stories word for word because of the frequency with which he hears them. These "broken record" types of discussions are extremely aggravating to those who hear them repeatedly. Even though the participants may mention hearing this story once before, the compulsive talker still continues. Obviously, repeating the same stories to people indicates that compulsive talkers do not pay attention to what they have told people

before, and they may not even care if the listener has heard the story before. They may just talk so much that they forget what stories they tell to certain people. Instead, they repeat themselves and tell the same stories with great frequency. Ignoring the fact people have heard the story before also appears to be a quality issue. How many times can someone hear a story before they become annoyed and frustrated? According to the participants, after two or three occurrences they were ready to move forward.

Compulsive talkers talk too much, and the quality of their communication is low. It should be noted that someone who talks too much is not an effective communicator, so their communication is of poor quality. Therefore, it is my claim that compulsive talkers lack basic communication skills. Whether the issue is ignoring nonverbal cues, the topic they discuss, or the "broken record" conversations, each of these examples is lacking quality in execution. Obviously these compulsive talkers are not participating in the way that normal conversation operates in the workplace. Certain methods exist to assist those individuals with a fear of public speaking, reticence, and other communication apprehensions. Unfortunately, compulsive talking may be equally, if not more, damaging to an individual. Without the proper understanding of the appropriate and accepted ways of communicating with others, a compulsive talker could continue to cause significant damage to their overall perception and assessment. This is basic conversation skill, so perhaps the opportunity exists for them to receive training on communication style. While this training will not solve their compulsive talking behavior, it might help them

understand the basics of communication and how their lack of skills impacts those around them.

On the other hand, as previous·studies suggest, talkative people are often perceived as being more intelligent by those around them (Mortensen, Arntson & Lustig, 1977). Many of the respondents in the present study did comment that they perceive the compulsive talker they work with to be intelligence. They believe these compulsive talkers are smart individuals who could speak fluently on numerous topics. These participant's observations changed drastically over time, however, as the repetitiveness and the constant flow from one conversation to another altered their initial perceptions. The respondents started questioning whether the compulsive talker was as intelligent as they originally thought. They also began to realize that this compulsive behavior will eventually trap the over talker into their current positions without the opportunity for advancement. This suggests that people who talk excessively might be perceived as intelligent, as previous studies mentioned, but over time as the communication is taken too far, these over talkers are perceived differently.

Another conclusion became apparent during this study. With the exception of the two supervisors, how come nobody in this study talked to the compulsive talkers about their behavior? What about giving them feedback? Could talking with these individuals about their behavior prove more successful? Universities and businesses often develop programs to train individuals to give presentations to groups of people. Books, audio instructions, and class settings exist for the purpose of giving people the

tools and education to speak effectively in a variety of situations. Perhaps the leaders responsible for the budgets and resources of universities and companies believe the money is better spent on other developmental programs.

There is an obvious lack of direct feedback being given to compulsive talkers about their behavior. Nobody has come out directly to say to these people, "Hey, you talk too much." Few people will stop the compulsive talker during a "broken record" type story and say, "You're telling me the same story over and over again." In the few examples given by the participants, when feedback was given the compulsive talkers ignored it by saying, "I always talked too much." Even those who supervise these individuals make little mention to compulsive talkers that they need to stop talking. Maddy recognizes the stacks of unattended work on her compulsive talking employee's desk, while the rest of her employees wonder whether this compulsive talker performs any work during the week at all. The compulsive talker is less productive, and makes the rest of the team less productive as well. Maddy now avoids the compulsive talker, which ultimately takes attention away from the rest of her staff.

Certain approaches designed to avoid giving feedback seem excessive, including people asking for changes in seating assignments, taking their laptops to other areas for quiet time, shifting their work schedules, or simply avoiding walking through the area where the compulsive talker works. Constructive feedback to the compulsive talker could prove beneficial. Since compulsive talkers find their behavior to be non-damaging, hearing the opposite may actually have an impact.

Typically compulsive behaviors are perceived as damaging. Compulsive talkers may not understand the impact their talkativeness has on them and those involved. Actually talking with the compulsive talker and identifying the amount of time their conversations take away from overall productivity could be helpful and necessary in the workplace. Consistent feedback by their supervisors might shed light on the problems they cause and the unproductive atmosphere they influence every day. For a supervisor, it could be much easier to have a conversation with an employee about his or her behavior and avoid the costs and additional work required for those who asked to be moved from that area. Why would coworkers continue to take unfinished assignments home or adjust their work schedule just so their fellow coworker can tell them the same story three times a day? Many of the participants tried to avoid being rude or abrasive when ending the conversations and may be equally hesitant to provide feedback that could upset the compulsive talker. Therefore, avoiding the conflict and putting up with the aggravation might be easier for them instead. This whole idea goes back to the discussion that compulsive talkers do not perceive their talkative behavior as damaging.

What was the overall perception of the compulsive talker's impact on the workplace? This tendency to take conversation to the extreme resulted in an overwhelming assessment that compulsive talkers were damaging to the office. However, most of the participants do not actually mention that compulsive talkers have an overall negative impact on their workplace. In fact, the respondents state that their assessment on the impact is very low overall. Unfortunately, many of the

participants feel there is nothing left to do but to shrug off this talkative behavior off as part of their day and something that with which they have to deal. They are forced to deal with compulsive talkers every day and no coping strategy seems to work all of the time. Some find them amusing and pawn them off on clients to keep them entertained in the lobby. On the other hand, many of the respondents mention that these conversations take precious works hours away. The participants think of these conversations as being a distraction to their work day, often taking one hour a week. The overall productivity of the entire workforce involved must be impacted negatively.

What does future study look like? Because so few studies exist there are numerous directions these studies can go. Do these people talk nonstop only at work? If the assumption currently is that compulsive talkers are compulsive across all situations, then following these individuals throughout their day could be beneficial. Future studies could also focus on watching the interaction of compulsive talkers within families or work place situations. As for policies that should be adopted, it became apparent from these interviews that business professionals do not judge compulsive talkers highly. They describe them as a waste of time and energy with very little to add to their lives. For these reasons, we need to look for ways to help these people overcome their compulsiveness. Or perhaps we should question why these compulsive talkers have not been fired from their jobs.

The main focus in the future should be determining ways of intervening with compulsive talkers. Overall, it is quite clear that there needs to be intervention. We

have methods to help intervene with shy or anxious people and we need to develop

interventions to help out compulsive talkers. The problem is figuring out what is

going to work best. This may require communication professionals to partner with

other fields that work with compulsive behavior. For example, compulsion is a

psychological concept. Compulsive talkers cannot stop talking even if they try.

Therefore, we may need to partner with the field of psychology to develop methods

of intervention. This problem still requires the focus of communication scholars.

This is also a communication problem. Compulsive talkers have difficulty

communicating in an appropriate way. The reason for the partnership is that these

people have a talking problem, but their problem is a compulsive behavior.

Partnering with people that specialize in compulsive behaviors could help us

determine if this really is a compulsion in the same way as sex, drugs, and gambling.

In conclusion, the fact of the matter is very few studies exist about compulsive

talkers, which leaves this area of study wide open. The participants in this study have

frustrations, as they are forced to constantly take smoke breaks or run to the

bathrooms to find escape from the interaction. This behavior does push people away.

You can see how tough it is for people to get close to compulsive talkers because the

behavior is so aggravating. Someone asking for her work station to be moved in

order to increase productivity is not the most productive way of handling this issue.

Also, working additional hours during the day, like Michelle does, takes away from

what coworkers should be doing during their personal time away from work. These

responses are very disturbing and confusing; especially considering that multiple

participants mention the work place is much more productive when the compulsive talker is away from work. In the examples of Denise and Sheryl, the workplace actually experiences productivity increase when the compulsive talker is out of the office. The coworkers celebrate these days of freedom and comment to one another at how peaceful the office is during the compulsive talker's absence. If we can find ways to intervene and help compulsive talkers with their behavior we would be making an important contribution. The topic certainly requires more study. Developing the appropriate techniques for communicating with compulsive talkers, especially for teachers, supervisors, and managers, will help increase efficiencies within the classroom or workplace. With the small amount of study done the opportunities to investigate this problem further are definitely required, and strenuously urged.

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Appendix A

The Talkaholic Scale

DIRECTIONS: The questionnaire below includes sixteen statements about talking

behavior. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of these

characteristics applies to you by marking, on the line before each item, whether you

(5) strongly agree that it applies, (4) agree that it applies, (3) are undecided, (2)

disagree that it applies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no right or

wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression.

1. Often I keep quiet when I know I should talk.

2. I talk more than I should sometimes.

3. Often, I talk when I know I should keep quiet.

4. Sometimes I keep quiet when I know it would be to my advantage to talk.

5. I am a "talkaholic."

6. Sometimes I feel compelled to keep quiet.

7. In general, I talk more than I should.

8. I am a compulsive talker.

9. I am not a talker; rarely do I talk in communication situations.

10. Quite a few people have said I talk too much.

11. I just can't stop talking too much.

12. In general, I talk less than I should.

13. I am not a "talkaholic."

14. Sometimes I talk when I know it would be to my advantage to keep quiet.

15. I talk less than I should sometimes.

16. I am <u>not</u> a compulsive talker.

Appendix B

The Talkaholic Scale - Observer Report

DIRECTIONS: The questionnaire below includes sixteen statements about talking behavior. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each of these characteristics applies to you by marking, on the line before each item, whether you (5) strongly agree that it applies, (4) agree that it applies, (3) are undecided, (2) disagree that it applies, or (1) strongly disagree that it applies. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly; record your first impression.

1. Often this person keeps quiet when talk is necessary.

2. Sometimes this person talks more than he or she should.

3. Often this person talks when he or she should keep quiet.

4. Sometimes this person keeps quiet when it would be to his or her advantage to talk.

5. This person is a "talkaholic."

6. In general, this person talks more than he or she should.

7. This person is a compulsive talker.

8. This person rarely talks in communication situations.

9. Other people say that this person talks too much.

10. This person can't seem to stop talking too much.

11. In general, this person talks less than he or she should.

12. This person is not a "talkaholic."

13. Sometimes this person talks when it would be to his or her advantage to keep quiet.

14. This person is not a compulsive talker.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

1. What does this person do that makes you think they talk too much?

2. What does this person talk about?

3. How do they talk about these things?

4. What are your initial thoughts when confronted by this compulsive talker?

5. Describe a typical encounter with this compulsive talker.

6. If I were to watch you interact with this compulsive talker at work what would I see

   and hear?

7. How does interacting with this person affect you?

8. How does this affect your workplace?

9. What ways do you try to cope with this behavior?

10. How do you end conversations with this person?

11. Describe your opinion of the person you are discussing.

12. Do you have anything further you would like to add?