PERCEPTIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO THE LEVELS OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

by

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TO KEVIN EAMON McCLEAREY,

whose capacity for love and optimism

is an ever-present source of wonder.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a fact of interpersonal life. Whenever two or more individuals enter into a relationship, differences are bound to emerge. Those communication scholars who recognize this and study conflict do not view it negatively, as an aberration, disease, or the result of communication "breakdown." Rather, the works of Simons (1972), Hawes and Smith (1973), Jandt (1973), Doolittle (1976), and Frost and Wilmot (1978) reflect a positive and realistic view of conflict: that it is an inevitable and potentially valuable part of any interpersonal relationship.

An interpersonal relationship may grow or deteriorate depending upon how the individuals perceive and communicate their differences. We seem to know quite a bit about people's perceptions of conflict and behavior in mixed-motive or bargaining games (see, for example, Tedeschi et al., 1973; Wrightsman et al., 1972; Rapoport and Chammah, 1965; Rapoport et al., 1976). Moreover, we have begun to instruct students and the public-at-large on how to "fight fair," or communicate effectively in conflict situations (see, for example, Bach and Wyden, 1968; Karrass, 1974). Neither set of literature, however, deals with how individuals normally perceive an interpersonal conflict, nor with their ability to respond to such situations. This investigation was designed to explore these issues.

I limited the study to <u>interpersonal conflict</u> which, as defined by Frost and Wilmot: "...is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties, who perceive incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals. They

are in a position of opposition in conjunction with cooperation" (1978, p. 9). Specifically, I explored two aspects of interpersonal conflict. First, individuals' abilities to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of interpersonal conflict were assessed. Second, I studied individuals' numbers and foci of responses to interpersonal conflict. It was speculated that gender-related differences might exist regarding both aspects of interpersonal conflict. One line of research suggested that an individual's perceptions of and, consequently, ability to respond to his/her interpersonal world depend greatly upon his/her degree of cognitive complexity. Thus, the relationship between cognitive complexity and ability to perceive levels of interpersonal conflict, and responses to such conflict served as the third focus of the study.

In sum, the topics investigated were levels of interpersonal conflict, responses to interpersonal conflict, and cognitive complexity. I will discuss each of these topics below, along with the research questions which guided the investigation. The hypotheses generated from these research questions will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Levels of Interpersonal Conflict

It has become rather common for authors of interpersonal communication texts to note that there are two levels to every message: 1) the content level which communicates the information of the message; and 2) the relationship level which communicates the individual's perception of himself/herself in relation to the other (see, for example, Stewart, 1973; Patton and Giffin, 1974; Wilmot, 1975; Knapp, 1978).

The team of Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967) appears to have originated this conceptualization in The Pragmatics of Human Communication. They revised Bateson's (1951) characterization which stipulates that every message has a report aspect which conveys information that is true, false or undecidable, and a command aspect which refers to "what sort of message it is to be taken as" (see Watzlawick et al., pp. 51-52). The relationship level, according to Watzlawick et al., conveys a message about one or more assertions such as: "this is how I see you...this is how I see myself...this is how I see you seeing me," and so forth. The relationship level is said to "classify" the content level. Thus, it is clear from the authors' discussion that the relationship level is accorded primary importance.

Interpersonal conflict can also be said to occur at the content and relationship levels. Deutsch (1973) seems to suggest the existence of these levels when he makes a distinction between "manifest" (i.e. content) and "underlying" (i.e. relationship) conflict. He warns that the manifest conflict often cannot be resolved unless the underlying conflict is dealt with, or unless the manifest conflict is disconnected and dealt with in isolation (p. 159). More specifically, Frost and Wilmot note that most interpersonal conflicts include content and relationship goals (1978, p. 100). That is, there are both conflict issues reflecting disagreement or incompatibility at the content level (e.g. "I'd rather go skiing than go home with you to meet your parents, which is what you want"), and at the relationship level (e.g. "He wants me to be more involved in this relationship than I want to be").

Wilmot (1975) also discusses these levels of conflict in terms of issue (content) and relational (relationship) conflicts. He points out

that any dyadic transaction can be analyzed on both levels, but that the distinctions between them often become blurred as individuals focus on one level. For example, although the basis of the conflict may initially be focused on the content level, a shift may occur such that the conflict will be acted out primarily on the relationship level. Wilmot posits that it is most common for a relational conflict to be acted out in terms of the content level. Furthermore, he states that, "...in most dyads individuals probably begin at the issue dimension and never fully discuss the relational aspects" (p. 102). Wilmot can offer no empirical support for these assertions and, therefore, notes the need for "detailed research" to determine "the precise linkage or overlap between the issue and relationship dimensions..." (p. 102).

Turning again to Frost and Wilmot (1978) we find more speculations. They posit that productive goal analysis incorporates both content and relationship issues without devaluing either one. However, "...usually the relationship issue is ignored by one side or the other as a power ploy" (p. 100). This may or may not be true, but the ability to ignore one level of the conflict presupposes that the parties are able to perceive both levels and there is no evidence to suggest such a presumption. It is quite possible that one or both individuals may be so caught up in one level of the conflict that they simply do not "see" the other level. A second speculation can be found in a discussion of gender-related differences in conflict style. The authors argue that men are socialized to believe that women have an "unfair advantage" in conflicts since women have received relational training which tells them "what is going on." Consequently, say the authors, "...men are prone to push for 'airing the issues' and 'getting things on the table' in a

manner that focuses attention on the content issues as compared to the relationship issues" (p. 34). This argument suggests that perhaps men are more likely to perceive and thus respond on the content level of an interpersonal conflict, whereas women are more likely to perceive and respond on the relationship level.

Clearly, there are some unanswered questions regarding this topic. It seems logical to assume that both content and relationship levels are inherent to all interpersonal conflict situations. No matter what the issue(s) or content of our disagreement, in some sense our relationship is also on the line. Your stand on a particular issue may be so odious to me that I may decide that I cannot remain in this relationship. Conversely, the resolution of a conflict on the content level may reassure me and reconfirm our relationship.

On the other hand, it is not necessarily logical to assume that individuals most often focus on the content rather than relationship level, that the relationship level is usually ignored as a power ploy, or that men are more likely to focus on content rather than relational issues. In fact, these assertions can and should be regarded as research questions which certainly merit serious study. However, there is a prior question which must be answered. That is, do individuals actually perceive both the content and the relationship levels of a conflict? I certainly cannot communicate my disagreements with you on the relationship level if I only perceive and deal with the content level (and vice versa). It may be that it is easier to perceive the content level. "You see black and I see white" is a simpler perception, and one easier to convey, than "Your disagreement causes me to think less of myself, less of you, and/or causes me to wonder what you think of me and our

relationship." In short, perception of the relationship level may be a more complex and, thus, more difficult phenomenon. If this be the case, more individuals would perceive only the simpler, content level of an interpersonal conflict, rather than the relationship level or both levels. Moreover, if Frost and Wilmot's assertion is correct, there should be differences between males' and females' perceptions of levels of interpersonal conflict. Of course, these speculations depend upon the answer to the prior question.

In summary, as a major portion of this investigation, I sought to clarify the nature of individuals' perceptions of the content and relationship levels of interpersonal conflict. Two questions were asked: Do individuals tend to perceive the content, relationship, or both levels of an interpersonal conflict? and Are there differences between women and men in perceptions of levels of an interpersonal conflict?

Responses to Interpersonal Conflict

Although much has been written about specific tactics and strategies that individuals can use in interpersonal conflict, no research exists which assesses the range or focus of responses. Simply stated, we do not know the number of different ways of responding that are available to individuals in a conflict situation.[1] Nor do we know which of these responses individuals are most likely to use. Certainly an individual with a greater number of different responses available to him/her has a better chance of resolving a conflict than an individual with just a few. If I can respond to you in one way only, this may elicit a singular response from you. At this point we have established what Leary terms a "lock-step" effect, making it still more difficult

to resolve our conflict (Leary, 1955). Of course, the outcome of a conflict also depends upon how likely the individual is to use the response(s) available to him/her. Thus, two more questions were asked in this study: Do individuals differ in the number of specific responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation? and From individuals' self-reports, how likely are they to use each response?

Additionally, it was reasoned that an individual's perception of the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict would influence his/her responses to the other in that situation, and that those responses would be primarily focused on one or both levels. Thus, the question emerged: Is there a relationship between subjects' perceptions of level of interpersonal conflict and focus of their response? For example, would an individual who perceives only the content level of the conflict, if asked to respond, make statements that refer to the content issue(s)? Would responses geared toward the relationship be made by an individual who perceives only the relationship level of the conflict? A much more interesting situation might arise when a person perceives both levels of an interpersonal conflict. Will his/her responses reflect these perceptions? More specifically, will s/he have more, different responses available to him/her than the individual who perceives only one level of the conflict? Will s/he tend to ignore the relationship level even though that level is perceived (as Frost and Wilmot suggest)? This investigation was designed to provide answers to these questions. Given that I was also interested in discovering which of the available responses individuals would be most likely to use, it seemed appropriate to ask an additional, supplementary

question: Is there a relationship between the perception of the levels of an interpersonal conflict and focus of responses that individuals are most likely to use?

The reader will recall Frost and Wilmot's argument which suggests that perhaps men focus responses to an interpersonal conflict on the content level and women focus responses on the relationship level (see p. 5). Therefore, it seemed appropriate to ask a final question concerning responses: Are there differences between men and women in focus of responses to an interpersonal conflict situation?

Cognitive Complexity

It seemed reasonable to assume that individuals would differ in both their abilities to perceive the levels of interpersonal conflict and in their ranges and foci of responses to that situation, and that such differences might be related to differences in individuals' cognitive systems. Specifically, it was speculated that cognitive complexity, an aspect of the interpersonal cognitive system, would be related to perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict. Although the relationship between cognitive complexity and interpersonal conflict has been ignored (with one exception) a great deal of indirect evidence points to such a relationship. In the following paragraphs I shall describe briefly the theory which underlies the concept of cognitive complexity, and then summarize those studies that are pertinent to this investigation.

As noted by Crockett, "A cognitive system, like any system, is composed of a set of elements in varying degrees and kinds of relationships to one another" (1965, p. 48). George Kelly's (1955) classic work

provides a theory of personality grounded in interpersonal cognitive systems, the elements of which are interpersonal constructs. Kelly posits that an individual aims to predict and control his/her social world through the use of the constructs available to him/her for interpreting that world. A construct, according to Kelly, "is a way in which some things are construed as being alike and yet different from others" (p. 105). Constructs and, thus, interpersonal cognitive (construct) systems vary from person to person in terms of number, kinds, and organization. This is due to the fact that constructs are based upon past experiences which are basically unique to each individual. Of course, to the extent that individuals have similar past experiences, their constructs are more likely to be similar.

One aspect of the interpersonal cognitive system which has received considerable attention is its complexity. Crockett has combined Kelly's construct theory with Werner's (1957)[2] developmental psychology to define cognitive complexity as follows:

> An interpersonal cognitive system will be relatively complex if it contains a large number of interpersonal constructs, and if these constructs are hierarchically integrated to a relatively high degree (1965, p. 49).

The number of constructs is referred to as the degree of differentiation. The degree of hierarchic integration refers to the complexity of the relationships among constructs and the degree to which superordinate, integrating constructs are used to relate clusters of constructs (see Crockett, pp. 49-50). Thus, there are two aspects to cognitive complexity. Degree of differentiation is relatively easy to establish and has been the primary measure of cognitive complexity used by researchers. For example, Crockett's Role Category Questionnaire (1965) asks subjects

to consider from two to eight individuals and spend three to five minutes describing each one. The number of constructs used in the descriptions provides the measure of cognitive differentiation. Crockett and his associates (1974) have also devised a system for measuring the degree of hierarchic integration. It has been found that individuals can be classified as cognitively complex or noncomplex based upon their scores on either or both measures. Theoretically, cognitively complex individuals have a broader range of constructs available to them for dealing with interpersonal stimuli than do cognitively noncomplex individuals. This difference has been repeatedly demonstrated in studies of cognitive complexity.

It has been well established that, given complex or conflicting information conditions, cognitively complex individuals generally form more elaborate and multivalent impressions of others than do cognitively noncomplex individuals (Mayo and Crockett, 1964; Nidorf and Crockett, 1965; Rosenkrantz and Crockett, 1965; Meltzer, Crockett and Rosenkrantz, 1966). This general tendency, however, does not occur under certain conditions. For example, the set to understand or evaluate a stimulus person has been found to mediate this tendency such that in the latter case cognitively complex individuals form no more elaborate and multivalent impressions than do noncomplex individuals (set to understand or evaluate is not a factor in impression formation for the latter group; see Crockett, Mahood and Press, 1975; Press, Crockett and Delia, 1975). Moreover, if the stimulus person appears to have values incongruent with that of the subject, no differences between cognitively complex and noncomplex individuals emerge; when values appear to be congruent, the usual differences are found (Meltzer, Crockett and Rosenkrantz, 1966).

Nonetheless, the general finding indicates that cognitively complex individuals are better able to tolerate conflicting information about others than are noncomplex individuals. An additional finding is that the condition of set to understand greatly increases the use of motivational inferences to reconcile conflicting information for complex subjects (Press, Crockett and Delia, 1975). This indicates that these individuals have a greater ability to go beyond the manifest content than do noncomplex individuals.

It has also been found that cognitively complex individuals learn unbalanced structures with significantly less difficulty than do noncomplex individuals, and that the latter group is more prone to use and cling to the balance schema, even when it proves dysfunctional (Press, Crockett and Rosenkrantz, 1969; Delia, 1970; Delia and Crockett, 1973). Thus, it seems that complex individuals process unbalanced (i.e. conflicting) information differently than do noncomplex individuals.

A correlational study by Hale and Delia (1976) revealed that there is a significant, positive relationship between cognitive complexity and the ability to take the perspective of others in a conflicting social situation (e.g. recall a situation where someone you like hurt or disappointed you). Hale and Delia characterize perspective-taking ability as a "second-order" construal process given that the individual must construe how the situation appears to the other. The cognitively complex individual emerges as the one with the flexibility to engage in this process.

Saine (1974) reviewed many of the above-mentioned studies conducted by Crockett and his associates, plus cognitive complexity research

conducted by Bieri et al. and Schroder et al.,[3] and drew the tentative conclusion that:

> ...high complexity interactants, due to their ability to create and tolerate conflicting perspectives on human behavior, are more sensitive to interpersonal conflict than are low complexity interactants (p. 51).

Saine conducted two experiments to test this conclusion. For both, the measure of cognitive complexity was obtained using Schroder, Driver and Streufert's Paragraph Completion Test (1967). He then presented subjects with data about members of a hypothetical family. The data included age, birth place, physical appearance, political affiliation, etc. He asked subjects to survey the data and then "...pair pieces of information which represent a potential source of family conflict (e.g. mother is Catholic, father is Jewish)" (p. 53). Subjects were also asked to rate each pair as to the degree of conflict one might expect to result. As Saine expected, complex subjects reported significantly more instances of interpersonal conflict than did noncomplex subjects. Complex subjects also crossed categories (e.g. birth place and age) significantly more frequently than did noncomplex subjects in all but one condition. No consistent differences as a function of complexity were found in ratings of degree of conflict.

Saine's results are interesting and, in fact, provided the impetus for this part of the investigation. However, it seems that his "perceptions" of interpersonal conflict would more properly be termed "projections" of conflict on the basis of scant information, since subjects neither read of, witnessed, nor participated in an actual interpersonal conflict situation. Nonetheless, Saine's results suggest that there are differences between cognitively complex and noncomplex individuals in

ability to construe interpersonal conflict situations. This investigation explored the extent to which such differences operated as subjects read a transcript of an interpersonal conflict situation.

The research conducted by Crockett and his associates also suggests that complex individuals are more sensitive to their interpersonal world than are noncomplex individuals. Cognitively complex persons seem to "see" and integrate both positive and negative stimulus information more effectively, and to see better another's viewpoint in an uncomfortable situation. It was reasoned that the ability to perceive both the content and relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict might require a more complex cognitive process than does the perception of just one level. The cognitively complex individual might have such requisite abilities. Thus, the evidence from Saine's and Crockett's research led to another research question: Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict?

Given that the complex individual has a greater number of constructs at his/her disposal, it was posited that this degree of differentiation would be manifested by a greater number of responses to an interpersonal conflict. The results of an unpublished study conducted by Press provided support for this position.[4] Subjects were asked to explain why, after an initial date, both persons had a good time, both persons had a bad time, or one had a good time and the other a bad time. Press found that in all conditions complex subjects were able to generate more reasons to explain the outcome than noncomplex subjects. These reasons can also be viewed as responses to an interpersonal situation. We do not know, however, whether complex subjects can generate a greater

number of different responses to an interpersonal conflict situation. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to ask: Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and the number of responses made to an interpersonal conflict? A supplementary question was also asked: Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and the number of responses made to an interpersonal conflict that individuals indicate they would actually use in a similar situation?

Finally, it appeared reasonable to suggest that if there are differences between cognitively complex and noncomplex subjects in ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict, there might also be differences in focus of responses to that situation. Thus, a final major question was asked: Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and responses that focus on the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict? Again, a supplementary question was posed: Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and focus of responses that individuals indicate they would actually use?

Summary

The recognition that conflict is an inevitable and potentially valuable aspect of all interpersonal relationships provided the impetus for the investigation proposed in this chapter. I chose to study two components of interpersonal conflict and one aspect of the interpersonal cognitive system which may help us to understand better these components. First, I attempted to demonstrate the existence and importance of two levels of interpersonal conflict - content and relationship. A review of the literature revealed no empirical study of these levels.

Rather, discussions of content and relationship levels were found which were mainly unsupported assertions. In fact, we do not know if individuals actually perceive both levels. Similarly, no attention has previously been given to range and focus of responses available to individuals in a conflict situation. The second focus of the investigation, then, was the study of individuals' responses to interpersonal conflict. An effort was also made to determine whether gender relates to differences in perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict. Finally, much indirect evidence suggested that individuals' degrees of cognitive complexity might be related to their ability to perceive the content and relationship levels of interpersonal conflict, and their range of responses to that situation. The major research questions which emerged from these considerations are as follows:

1. Do individuals tend to perceive only the content, only the relationship, or both levels of an interpersonal conflict?

2. Are there differences between women and men in perceptions of the levels of an interpersonal conflict?

3. Do individuals differ in the number of specific responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation?

4. From individuals' self-reports, how likely are they to use each response?

5. Is there a relationship between perceived level(s) of an interpersonal conflict and the focus of responses to that situation?

6. Are there differences between women and men in focus of responses to an interpersonal conflict situation?

7. Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict?

8. Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and the number of responses made to an interpersonal conflict?

9. Is there a relationship between cognitive complexity and responses that focus on the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict?

From a pilot study, it became clear that some responses to conflict situations were simply procedural in nature. That is, they dealt solely with how the individuals could or should handle the conflict situation, and were not specifically related to the content or relationship issues. Thus, it was decided to include procedures as a category of responses in addition to content and/or relationship. Beisecker (1970), through his research into verbal persuasive strategies in mixed-motive situations, has shown that such a category of responses is a valid one. He found that subjects' responses to an interpersonal conflict may be focused solely on the procedures necessary to resolve the conflict. The results of the pilot study also indicated that men and women might differ in the use of this type of response. Thus, another research question was formulated prior to conducting the final experiment:

10. Are there differences between women and men in the number of procedural responses made to an interpersonal conflict situation?

Given the lack of prior empirical research, it did not seem plausible to generate hypotheses from research questions one, three, and four. Rather, it seemed appropriate to gather descriptive data which might be used in the future for generating testable hypotheses about individual differences. Nine hypotheses were generated from the other research questions and tested in this investigation. A summary of these hypotheses follows.

Hypotheses

1. Men will differ from women in ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict.

II. There will be a correspondence between the perception of content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal focus of responses.

III. Men will be more likely than women to use responses to an interpersonal conflict that focus on the content level.

IV. Women will be more likely than men to use responses to an interpersonal conflict that focus on the relationship level.

V. Cognitively complex individuals will differ from noncomplex individuals in ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict.

VI. Cognitively complex individuals will have a greater number of available responses to an interpersonal conflict than will cognitively noncomplex individuals.

VII. Cognitively complex individuals will be more likely than noncomplex individuals to use responses to an interpersonal conflict that focus on both the content and relationship levels.

IX. Men will differ from women in the use of responses to an interpersonal conflict that focus on procedures.

In the next chapter I will discuss the methods and procedures that I used to test these hypotheses.

CHAPTER TWO: PROCEDURES

In the last chapter I posed several research questions, and stated nine hypotheses. My aim in this chapter is to present the methods and procedures which provided tests of these hypotheses and answers to the questions posed. First, I provided subjects with a believable, realistic interpersonal conflict situation. Then I obtained subjects' perceptions of that situation, along with their available responses and likelihood of using them. I also obtained a measure of cognitive complexity for each subject.

Subjects

University of Kansas students enrolled in the Basic Communication Program, Spring Semester, 1979, served as subjects. Participation in the study fulfilled the students' Experiment Participation requirement for the semester. A total of 52 women and 43 men participated in the study.

Procedures

I conducted four experimental sessions on January 25, 1979, with 20-30 subjects participating in each one. When subjects arrived, I gave each person an informed consent statement (see Appendix A). After reading it, all 95 subjects agreed to participate in the study. I then gave each subject a booklet containing all stimulus materials for the study (see Appendix A; all booklets were identical).

The first section of the booklet was titled "Social Perception Questionnaire." Actually, this was a two-person version of Crockett's Role Category Questionnaire (1965; see Appendix A). After they completed the Role Category Questionnaire I instructed subjects to turn to the next section of the booklet. This section contained a transcript of a purported conversation between two roommates, J. and M., that had been taped the previous year while they were waiting to participate in an experiment. The conversation was designed to be a conflict situation with clear content and relationship issues.[5] It had been pilot-tested the previous semester with 24 subjects (also from the Basic Communication Program), and all but two agreed that it was a realistic and believable situation. Specifically, the conversation centered upon which of the two roommates would use the apartment for the weekend (content issue), and the amount of time the two roommates had been spending together since one of them had established a romantic relationship with a member of the other gender (relationship issue; see Appendix A for the entire conversation).

I instructed subjects to read carefully the first section of the transcript. The booklet then asked them to "give your impression of what this conversation is about as fully as you can," on the next page. They were given five minutes to write their impressions of the conversation. After five minutes I instructed subjects to turn the page and read the second part of the transcript, which concluded with comments from J.. At this point subjects were asked to put themselves in M.'s place and to hear J.'s last statement as directed toward them. Then I instructed them to use the next page to write as many different responses as they could think of to J.'s last statement. They were given ten

minutes to write their responses. Finally, on the last page of the booklet, subjects received instructions to go back and rate the responses they had written as to how likely they would be to actually use each of them in a similar situation. Subjects used a scale from 1 (very likely) to 7 (very unlikely) to rate their responses.

When all subjects were finished rating their responses I collected the booklets, discussed the experiment briefly, and then distributed a debriefing statement which fully explained the purposes of the study (see Appendix A).

Data Preparation

In order to test the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1, an extensive amount of data preparation was required prior to data analysis. This section will provide a detailed discussion of the procedures employed to transform the somewhat unstructured information provided by subjects in the booklets to orderly data, amenable to hypothesis-testing. First, I will describe the scoring procedure for assigning subjects to cognitively complex or noncomplex categories. Second, the method used for determining perceptions of the levels of the conflict will be outlined, followed by a similar method used for coding responses. Third, I will explain the procedure for determining the dominant focus of responses. Finally, I will describe the categorizing procedure for responses subjects would be most likely to use.

Cognitive Complexity

Subjects' descriptions on the Role Category Questionnaire provided the measures of cognitive complexity. Crockett's scoring procedure for

degree of differentiation, as described by Crockett et al. (1974), was used. Each subject was assigned a complexity score based upon the total number of constructs included in both descriptions. Median scores were calculated for men and women separately,[6] and then each subject was categorized as cognitively complex if his/her score was above the median, or noncomplex if his/her score was below the median.

The experimenter initially calculated the complexity scores for all 95 subjects. Then, to test for scoring reliability, I selected 20 Questionnaires at random (10 male and 10 female subjects) and gave them to a separate judge to score independently.[7] A rank correlation coefficient (Spearman r_{rho}) was calculated to determine the inter-rater reliability for the 20 Questionnaires. The reliability coefficient was .897 for this sample; therefore, the use of the experimenter's scores for these and all other Questionnaires was considered acceptable for later analyses.

Perceptions of the Conflict

It was then necessary to code subjects' impressions of the conversation for perceptions of the content, relationship, or both levels of the conflict. I designed a coding scheme with specific criteria for placing subjects' impressions in one of three categories: content, relationship, or content and relationship. The coding scheme is presented in detail in Appendix B.

Frost and Wilmot's (1978) definition of conflict served as the guide for establishing content level criteria (see Chapter 1). Thus, impressions were classified as content if they included perceptions of a struggle between J. and M. over incompatible goals, scarce rewards,

and/or interference from the other in achieving goals. The incompatible goals in this situation were: J. wanted the apartment for the weekend for s/he and T. only, while M. wanted to stay at the apartment and study for the weekend. The scarce rewards were: for J., limited time and space to be alone with T. and have privacy; for M., a need for a quiet place for the weekend to get caught up on studies. The interference for J. was that if M. stayed for the weekend, J. and T. would not be alone and, thus, would have no privacy. The interference for M. was that if J. and T. stayed at the apartment all weekend, M. would not have a quiet place to get caught up on studies and no place to sleep. The following is an example of a subject's impression which was coded as content:

> "Two roommates who share an apartment are talking. J who has a girl-friend, T, wishes to use the apartment all weekend when M is gone home to his parents home. It comes out in this conversation that this weekend M cannot afford to go home because of a pileup of studies - he needs to shut himself in the apartment and study. He is upset to find that J and T plan to be there all weekend and insists he has the right to be there and that J did it on purpose..."

Of the 95 impressions, 32 (34.0%) were coded as content.

The scheme called for coding an impression as <u>relationship</u> if it reflected perceptions of how J. and M. saw themselves, one another, and/or their relationship. More specifically, if the impression included any or all of the following perceptions only, it was assigned to the relationship category: 1) how M. sees M.; 2) how M. sees J.; 3) how M. sees J. seeing M.; 4) how M. sees M.'s and J.'s relationship; and/or 5) how M. sees J.'s and T.'s relationship. These criteria were based upon Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson's (1967) conceptualization of the relationship level. An example of a relationship impression follows:

> "These are two guys talking who have gradually growing away from each other, and are now really letting their feelings out about the situation. J and M used to be very good friends. They used to party together and were able to talk seriously and intimately to one another. J got a girlfriend and began spending more and more time with her. The friendship he had with M has been replaced with T. M did not have anyone else to turn to, so he began to resent T..."

Nine of the 95 impressions (9.6%) were coded as relationship.

If an impression reflected perceptions of both content and relationship issues it was coded as content and relationship. Specifically, I coded an impression as content and relationship if it included statements that fulfilled at least one of the criteria from the content and relationship categories. An impression which illustrates this category follows:

> "At first J. just assumes that M. would be going home over the weekend - in fact, he probably, in his mind, wanted M. to go home so he could have the apartment all to himself and T. When M. found out that J. had invited T. without asking him, he was very upset but what really came through in their argument was the fact that M. is jealous of T. since J. is spending all of his time with T. instead of M. as they used to. What started as an argument over not telling who was leaving for the weekend ended on revealing true feelings that had not been expressed before."

A total of 53 impressions (56.4%) were coded as content and relationship. Only one of the 95 impressions did not fulfill any of the criteria for the three categories, and was deemed uncodeable.

Responses

Subjects generated a total of 881 responses to J.'s last comment on the transcript. Each of these responses was matched against a set of criteria that allowed for categorizing them as content, relationship, content and relationship, or procedures (see Appendix B). The criteria for the first three categories were basically the same as those used

for coding impressions of the conflict. Thus, if a response included a reference to goals, scarce rewards and/or interference from the other in achieving goals, I coded it as content. A response was coded as relationship if it referred to: 1) how M. sees M.; 2) how M. sees J.; 3) how M. sees J. seeing M.; 4) how M. sees M.'s and J.'s relationship; and/or 5) how M. sees J.'s and T.'s relationship. If a response fulfilled one or more of the criteria from the content and relationship categories, I coded it as content and relationship.

As was indicated in Chapter 1, the responses from the pilot study indicated that a fourth category of responses, procedures, should be added to the original three. A response was coded as procedures if it referred to how J. and M. might or might have, could or could have, should or should have handled this conflict. Four examples of responses fulfilling the criteria for each category are presented below:

Content

> "Look, if you really want to be alone with T, why don't you go over to her place once in a while?"
> "OK, go ahead, I guess I could do my studying at my parents home because I can see you really want to be alone with her."
> "Listen, let me have it for the first part of the weekend and you can have it the second part."
> "Hey, this is my apartment too. I need a familiar and a comfortable place to study and the apartment is it."

Relationship

> "The friendship is over. Next semester, we go our separate ways for good."
> "Do you ever think about other people?"
> "J. I'm really sorry our friendship has come to this - I really thought we were friends."
> "When are you going to start seeing clear again, I don't mean to dislike T, but it is hard coping with you and easy to blame her."

Content and Relationship

"I think that your being pretty selfish by expecting me to move out just for your sake."
"J., you know that you're not being fair. I realize what you want but put yourself in my place."
"I can see you want to be with T., but don't be unfair and irrational with me."
"I guess I have no chance because you act as if this is your place and not mine."

Procedures

"I think this conversation is getting ridiculous. Let's start over again."
"Look, we can work it out so we both can use this place."
"We need to find some type of compromise."
"I really feel like we need to stop and reevaluate the situation."

Of the original group of 881 responses, 864 (98.07%) fulfilled at least one of the criteria from the four categories and, therefore, were coded. The number of responses coded for each category were: 1) content - 498 (57.6%); 2) relationship - 114 (13.2%); content and relationship - 177 (20.5%); and 4) procedures - 75 (8.7%).

Coding Scheme Reliability

Of course, it was necessary to insure that the coding scheme for impressions and responses was not idiosyncratic to the experimenter. The criteria for defining each category should have enabled another person, unacquainted with the study, to code in a similar manner. Therefore, I provided an independent judge with the coding scheme presented in Appendix B. After a thirty-minute training period, she independently coded ten randomly selected impressions and 89 randomly selected responses. The percentages of agreement between the experimenter and the judge were quite high. The rate of agreement for coding impressions was 80%, and the rate of agreement for coding responses was 86.5%. Thus, I

concluded that the criteria defining each category were valid and reliable and, therefore, I used the codings I assigned to impressions and responses to perform the appropriate analyses.

Focus and Likelihood of Responses

Two final steps were taken prior to data analyses. First, I assigned each subject's group of responses to a category of dominant response focus, which was based upon the greatest number of responses which had been coded a particular category. For example, if a subject had provided six content responses, two relationship responses, and three content and relationship responses, s/he was assigned to the category of content dominant response focus. When the number of responses was tied between two categories, the decision was made to assign the dominant focus to that aspect of the responses which appeared most frequently. Thus, for example, if a subject generated three relationship and three content and relationship responses, s/he was assigned to the category of relationship dominant response focus.

The final step was to determine which responses subjects would be most likely to use in a similar situation. The reader will recall that subjects used a scale from 1 (very likely) to 7 (very unlikely) to rate each of their responses. A rating of 4 was considered to be neutral or undecided. Those responses which subjects rated 1, 2, or 3 were thus designated as likely responses. The same procedure that was described above for assigning a category of dominant focus of all responses for each subject was employed to determine the dominant focus of responses that subjects would be likely to actually use in a similar situation (i.e., dominant likely response focus).

Data Analyses

In order to test the nine hypotheses and answer the descriptive research questions, several statistical analyses were performed using both the SPSS and BMDP computer programs available at the University of Kansas Computer Center. Various frequency distributions provided the descriptive data needed for answers to research questions 1, 3, and 4. The analyses that were performed to test the nine hypotheses were: contingency table analysis, analysis of variance, analysis of variance including repeated measures, and correlational analysis. The subprograms used to perform these analyses were: SPSS/CROSSTABS, SPSS/ANOVA, BMDP/BMDP2V, and SPSS/PEARSON CORR, respectively, In the next chapter I will discuss the results of the specific analyses in detail.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

In this chapter I will report the results obtained from the various data analyses. First, I will summarize the data pertinent to the descriptive research questions. Then I will report the results of the tests of Hypotheses. Results from supplementary analyses will be included throughout the discussion.

Descriptive Data

The first descriptive research question was, "Do individuals tend to perceive only the content, only the relationship, or both levels of an interpersonal conflict?" As reported in the last chapter, subjects' impressions of the conversation provided their perceptions of the level(s) of the conflict. A summary of the data obtained in answer to this question appears in Table 3-1 below.

Table 3-1
Perceptions of the Conflict

Level[1]	# of Subjects per Level[2]	Percentage
C	32	34.0%
R	9	9.6%
C&R	53	56.4%

[1] C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship.

[2] One impression was uncodeable.

As the table indicates, the greatest percentage of subjects perceived the content and relationship levels, suggesting a tendency for individuals to perceive both levels of an interpersonal conflict. Whereas

one-third perceived the content issues only, subjects were least likely to perceive the relationship issues only (i.e. a ratio of about one to ten). The suggestion is, obviously, that if individuals perceive only one level of an interpersonal conflict, it is the content level.

It seems appropriate to answer "yes" to the second descriptive research question, "Do individuals differ in the number of specific responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation?" The number of responses generated by each subject ranged from 3 to 16. The mean number of responses for all subjects was 9.1. The percentage of subjects who generated between 7 and 13 responses (one standard deviation above and below the mean [3.1]) was 66.3. The entire frequency distribution of number of responses for all subjects appears in Table C-1 (Appendix C).

Inspection of the data indicated differences in number of responses generated by male and female subjects. Women generated a total of 511 responses ($\overline{X}$ = 8.21). The frequency distributions for grouped male and female subjects appear in Tables C-2 and C-3. The results of an analysis of variance, with total number of responses serving as the dependent variable, showed that gender related significantly to mean number of responses (see Table C-16). Thus, the evidence suggests that women have more responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation than do men.

The final descriptive research question was, "From individuals' self-reports, how likely are they to use each response?" As reported in Chapter 2, a response was designated "likely" if the subject rated it 1, 2, or 3 using the scale provided in the booklet (Henceforth, any response or group of responses falling into this category will be called

"likely response(s)"). Overall subjects indicated that they would be likely to use 503 of the 864 responses (58.2%; $\overline{X}$ = 5.3). Of the 353 responses generated by men, 194 were designated likely responses (54.9%; $\overline{X}$ = 4.51). Women indicated that they would be likely to use 309 of the 511 responses (60.5%; $\overline{X}$ = 5.94). The difference between men and women in mean number of likely responses was shown to be significant by the results of an analysis of variance, where a significant effect for gender was obtained (see Table C-17).

Table 3-2 provides a further breakdown, by category, of all responses generated and likely responses.

Table 3-2
Responses to the Conflict

Category[1]	All Responses	Likely Responses	Likely/All Responses
C	498(57.6%)[2]	285(56.7%)[3]	57.2%[4]
R	114(13.2%)	60(11.9%)	52.6%
C&R	177(20.5%)	105(20.9%)	59.3%
P	75(8.7%)	53(10.5%)	70.7%

[1] C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content&Relationship; P = Procedures.

[2] These percentages reflect the % of the total number of all responses that were placed in each category.

[3] These percentages reflect the % of the total number of likely responses that were placed in each category.

[4] These percentages reflect, for example, that of 498 C responses, 285 or 57.2% were likely C responses.

As can be seen in the table, content responses accounted for over half of all responses generated and over half of all likely responses. In general, it appears that in an interpersonal conflict situation people would be more likely to use content responses than any other type

of response. It would also appear, at first glance, that people would be least likely to use procedural responses, given that this category accounted for only 8.7% of all responses and 10.5% of likely responses. However, the last column of the table reveals that there is a greater likelihood of a person actually using a procedural response if s/he can generate one (or more) as compared to other categories of responses. In other words, if a person can think of a procedural response, s/he is more likely to use it than to use a content, relationship, or content and relationship response. Finally, the table also shows that subjects preferred (and generated) responses which aimed at both the content and relationship levels over responses which aimed at the relationship level only.

Tests of Hypotheses

A Chi-square test for differences was used to test Hypothesis 1. The results of this analysis appear in Table C-4. A greater percentage of men (41.9%) than women (26.9%) perceived the content level only, and a greater percentage of women (65.4%) than men (44.2%) perceived both the content and relationship levels. Although the 20.2% and 16.0% differences, respectively, were sizeable enough to establish a trend in the direction of hypothesized differences between men and women in perceptions of the conflict, these differences were not great enough to yield significance (Chi-square = 3.83, df = 2). Therefore, the hypothesis that men and women would differ in the ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict was not supported.

Various analyses were performed to test Hypothesis II, which posited a correspondence between the perception of the level(s) of the conflict and the focus of responses. First, I compared the perceptions of the levels of the conflict with dominant focus of all responses, using the Chi-square test for differences. Next I employed the same procedure to compare perceptions of the levels of the conflict with dominant focus of likely responses. The results of these analyses, which appear in Tables C-5 and C-6, were nonsignificant. The system devised to determine dominant focus of response (see Chapter 2) necessarily resulted in a loss of information since each subject was assigned to one category only (i.e. all responses in other categories were disregarded). Thus, it seemed reasonable to test this hypothesis with another type of analysis. A repeated measures analysis of variance provided the means for comparing the perceptions of the levels of the conflict with the focus of each response generated by subjects. The analysis of variance yielded nonsignificant results ($F = 1.28$, $df = 2,88$; $p < .28$). Similarly, an analysis of variance utilizing only likely responses, yielded no significant results ($F = 2.09$, $df = 2,88$; $p < .13$). The results of these analyses appear in Tables C-7 and C-8. Obviously, Hypothesis II received no support and, therefore, it appears that the notion that there is a correspondence between perception of level(s) of an interpersonal conflict and focus of responses must be rejected. In the next chapter I will discuss possible explanations for this finding.

Hypothesis III proposed that men would be more likely than women to use content responses in an interpersonal conflict situation. This hypothesis was tested, first, as part of a two-way analysis of variance. Gender was the independent variable pertinent to this test and the

dependent variable was the total number of content responses generated by subjects. The analysis revealed no significant main effect for gender ($F = .13$, $df = 1, 19$; see Table C-9). A second test of this hypothesis, with total number of likely content responses dependent, also yielded no significant results ($F = .94$, $df = 1,91$; see Table C-10). Hypothesis III is rejected, therefore, and it is concluded that men and women do not differ in the use of content responses in an interpersonal conflict situation.

Hypothesis IV, which stated that women would be more likely than men to use relationship responses, was tested in a manner similar to that employed for tests of Hypothesis III. First, the total number of relationship responses generated by subjects served as the dependent variable of a two-way analysis of variance, where gender was one of the independent variables. The F-ratio of 8.98 revealed a significant main effect for gender ($p < .004$, $df = 1,91$; see Table C-11). As predicted, the mean number of relationship responses generated by women ($\overline{X} = 1.60$) was higher than the mean number of relationship responses generated by men ($\overline{X} = .72$). Likely relationship responses were selected as the dependent variable for a second analysis of variance (see Table C-12). The F-ratio of 3.87 approached significance ($p < .052$, $df = 1, 91$), suggesting a main effect for gender. Again, the mean number of likely relationship responses was higher for women ($\overline{X} = .85$) than for men ($\overline{X} = .37$). Given the support obtained from both tests, Hypothesis IV is retained. The conclusion is that, compared with men, women can generate more, and are more likely to use, responses that focus on the relationship level.

No differences between women and men were posited for use of content and relationship responses. Two supplementary analyses revealed that, in fact, there were no differences. First, with all content and relationship responses generated by subjects serving as the dependent variable, a significant main effect for gender did not emerge (see Table C-13). Similarly, gender was not a significant factor when likely content and relationship responses served as the dependent variable (see Table C-14).

The reader will recall that in the test of Hypothesis II, two repeated measures analyses of variance were employed as partial tests of the correspondence between perceptions of the levels of the conflict and focus of individual responses. Gender served as the other independent variable for these analyses. The first analysis, with the total number of responses generated by subjects serving as the dependent variable, revealed a significant main effect for gender ($F = 6.70$, $df = 1,91$; $p < .011$; see Table C-7). When only the number of likely responses served as the dependent variable, no significant effects for gender emerged (see Table C-8).[8] Given the results of these tests of Hypotheses III and IV and the supplementary analyses discussed above, it is evident that the main effect for gender obtained for all responses can be partially accounted for by the difference between men and women in the number of relationship responses generated. Tests of Hypothesis IX, to be discussed later, provide further explanation of this significant effect for gender.

A Chi-square test for differences provided the test for Hypothesis V. This hypothesis posited that cognitively complex subjects would differ from noncomplex subjects in perceptions of the content and/or

relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict. Table C-15 presents the results of this analysis. The Chi-square of 3.08 (df = 2) was not significant, and Hypothesis V is rejected. It appears, then, that cognitive complexity does not relate to the ability to perceive the levels of an interpersonal conflict.

Hypothesis VI, which proposed that cognitively complex subjects would generate a greater number of responses than noncomplex subjects, received support from various analyses. First, cognitive complexity was one of the independent variables for a two-way analysis of variance, with total number of responses serving as the dependent variable. The F-ratio of 9.34 for the main effect of complexity was significant ($p < .003$, df = 1, 91; see Table C-16). As predicted, the 50 cognitively complex subjects generated a total of 497 responses ($\overline{X} = 9.94$), and the 45 noncomplex subjects generated a total of 367 responses ($\overline{X} = 8.16$).

Correlational analyses were also performed, utilizing subjects' total complexity scores and number of responses. Since men's and women's total complexity scores were initially considered separately to establish the groups of cognitively complex and noncomplex subjects, it was necessary to perform the analyses separately for men and for women. The correlations provided further support for Hypothesis VI. That is, the correlations between complexity score and total number of responses generated were positive and significant for men, ($r = .32$, $p < .02$) and for women ($r = .45$, $p < .001$). Based upon these, and the analysis of variance results, Hypothesis VI is retained.

Supplementary analyses, identical to those used to test Hypothesis VI, were performed in an effort to determine whether complex subjects

would also be more likely than noncomplex subjects actually to use a greater number of responses in an interpersonal conflict situation. The total number of likely responses served as the dependent variable. By and large, these analyses yielded no significant results (see Table C-17 for the ANOVA results). The one exception was the correlation coefficient obtained when complexity scores were paired with number of likely responses for women ($r = .28$, $p < .022$). However, the significance of this finding is diminished by the fact that, overall, women indicated that they would be more likely than men actually to use a greater number of responses that were generated. Thus, it seems that, although cognitively complex individuals have a greater number of responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation, they are no more likely than cognitively noncomplex individuals to use the responses they generate.

A Chi-square test for differences was performed for initial tests of Hypotheses VII and VIII. The reader will recall that Hypothesis VII proposed that cognitively complex subjects would be more likely than noncomplex subjects to use responses that focus on the relationship level. Hypothesis VIII posited the same for responses that focus on the content and relationship level. Initially, these hypotheses were tested simultaneously. Level of complexity was compared with dominant focus of response. The results appear in Table C-18. The Chi-square of 1.70 ($df = 3$) was not significant, suggesting the absence of differences due to complexity in overall, dominant response focus. A second Chi-square test for differences, comparing level of complexity with dominant focus of likely responses, also yielded nonsignificant results, as shown in Table C-19.

Since the system used to determine dominant focus of response resulted in a loss of information (as explained under tests of Hypothesis II), it seemed appropriate to perform a supplementary analysis which would provide additional tests of these hypotheses. Specifically, a repeated measures analysis of variance was performed, with cognitive complexity serving as an independent variable, and the focus of each response generated by subjects serving as the dependent variable. The results of this analysis appear in Table C-20. The F-ratio of 8.58 was significant ($p < .004$, $df = 1, 91$), indicating that, overall, there is a relationship between cognitive complexity and focus of responses made to an interpersonal conflict. An additional supplementary analysis, with focus of each likely response dependent, revealed no significant main effect for complexity (see Table C-21).

The finding of a significant main effect for cognitive complexity when the focus of each response generated by subjects was dependent is further illuminated by separate tests of Hypotheses VII and VIII, and additional supplementary analyses. To test Hypothesis VII a two-way analysis of variance was performed. Cognitive complexity was one of the independent variables, and the total number of relationship responses served as the dependent variable. Table C-11 displays the results, which include a significant main effect for complexity ($F = 4.83$, $df = 1, 91$; $p < .031$). As predicted, cognitively complex subjects generated a greater number of relationship responses (75, $\overline{X} = 1.5$) than did noncomplex subjects (39, $\overline{X} = .87$). A supplementary analysis, with only likely relationship responses dependent, yielded no significant effect for complexity (see Table C-12). This finding indicates that although subjects who are cognitively complex may be able to

generate more relationship responses than subjects who are noncomplex, they are not necessarily likely to use them to a greater extent. However, the hypothesis as stated found support and, therefore, is retained.

Hypothesis VIII was not supported by the results of a similar analysis of variance procedure. When all content and relationship responses served as the dependent variable, there was no significant main effect for complexity (see Table C-13). It appears that complex subjects are no more likely than noncomplex subjects to use responses that focus on both the content and relationship levels. Consequently, Hypothesis VIII is rejected.

The results of five supplementary analyses employing likely content and relationship responses, content responses, likely content responses, procedural responses, and likely procedural responses as the dependent variables appear in Tables C-14, C-9, C-10, C-22, and C-23, respectively. No significant main effects for complexity were obtained in these analyses, and so it seems that cognitive complexity is not related to the ability to produce or actually use these types of responses.

Thus, it seems that the results of the repeated measures analysis of variance, reported above, can be accounted for, partly, by the significantly greater number of relationship responses generated by cognitively complex subjects. However, the pattern of responses generated is similar for the other three categories of responses such that cognitively complex subjects generated a greater number of each type of response than did noncomplex subjects. The mean numbers of each type of response generated by complex and noncomplex subjects appear below in Table 3-3. In fact, if the pattern of relationship responses generated

was significantly different from the pattern of the other three categories of responses, then a significant interaction effect would have emerged in the repeated measures analysis of variance (see Table C-20). Since such an effect did not emerge, it appears that the most reasonable conclusion is that cognitively complex individuals can generate more of each category of response than can noncomplex individuals.

Table 3-3
Mean Number of Each Category of Response
Generated by Complex and Noncomplex Subjects

Category[1]	Mean for Complex S's[2]	Mean for Noncomplex S's[3]
C	5.5	4.9
R	1.5	.8
C&R	1.9	1.8
P	.9	.6

[1] C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship; P = Procedures.
[2] N = 50. [3] N = 45.

The ninth and final Hypothesis posited that men would differ from women in the use of procedural responses. The test for this hypothesis was performed as part of a two-way analysis of variance, with gender included as one of the independent variables, and all procedural responses dependent. The results of this analysis appear in Table C-22. A significant main effect for gender emerged ($F = 4.37$, $df = 1,91$; $p < .039$), supporting the hypothesis that men and women differ in the ability to produce procedural responses. Women generated 50 procedures responses ($\overline{X} = .96$), and men generated 25 ($\overline{X} = .58$). Therefore, Hypothesis IX is retained and it can be concluded that women have more

procedural responses available to them in an interpersonal conflict situation than do men. This finding provides further explanation of the significant effect for gender obtained in the repeated measures analysis of variance, with all responses dependent, discussed earlier (see Table C-7). A supplementary analysis showed that women are no more likely than men to indicate that they would actually use the procedural responses that are available to them. When likely procedural responses served as the dependent variable, no significant effects for gender were found (see Table C-23).

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

This investigation yielded a number of interesting findings. In this chapter I will provide a further discussion of the results presented in Chapter 3. First, I will discuss the findings pertinent to perceptions of the levels of interpersonal conflict. Second, I will discuss the results relating to the range and focus of responses to interpersonal conflict. Throughout both sections, findings concerning cognitive complexity will be included. The third section will deal with the relationship between perceptions of interpersonal conflict and response focus. I will conclude the chapter with implications for further research.

Levels of Interpersonal Conflict

The evidence obtained in this study indicates that, overall, individuals tend to perceive both the content and relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict (56.4%). It should not be overlooked, however, that a sizeable percentage of subjects (43.6%) perceived only one level of the conflict and, for most, that was the content level (34.0%). There are definite differences in ability to perceive the levels of an interpersonal conflict, but the two factors which were predicted to relate to this ability failed to account for these differences.

First, in contradiction to Saine's (1974) findings and my hypotheses, when "sensitivity" is translated into perceptions of the levels of interpersonal conflict, cognitively complex individuals are no more sensitive to interpersonal conflict than are cognitively noncomplex individuals.

Second, the proposed differences in perceptions due to gender failed to attain significance. There was a sizeable trend in the hypothesized direction, however, such that more men than women perceived the content level only (41.9% vs. 26.9%), and more women than men perceived both the content and relationship levels (65.4% vs. 44.2%). Therefore, I hesitate to rule out this factor (i.e. gender) totally as a potential explicator of differences. I did not obtain measures of psychological gender from subjects, and it could be that these would have provided a more appropriate test of the hypothesis (see, for example, Bem, 1977). An androgynous male, for example, may be just as likely as a feminine female to perceive both levels of an interpersonal conflict. In short, further study is needed to account for differences in the perception of the levels of interpersonal conflict.

Responses to Interpersonal Conflict

In general, the results of this study indicate that individuals do have the ability to produce more than one specific response, and more than one type of response, to another in an interpersonal conflict situation. Actually, the average number of responses generated by subjects was quite high ($\overline{X} = 9.1$), and suggests that, at least in terms of number, most people have a rather broad range of responses available to them in this type of situation. The number varies, however, and the evidence indicates that two independent factors can help us to account for this variation. The first is gender. Specifically, women can generate more responses than men to another in an interpersonal conflict situation. Second, the evidence indicates that cognitive complexity is a factor, such that cognitively complex individuals, as compared to

noncomplex individuals, are able to generate more responses to another in an interpersonal conflict situation. The groups with the greater ranges of responses available to them may have more flexibility than the others when involved in an actual conflict situation.

Not all of the available responses would actually be used, however. Subjects in this study indicated that, in a similar situation, they would not be likely to use about 42 per cent of the responses they produced. Women, as compared to men, assert that they would actually use more of their available responses in a similar conflict situation (60.5% vs. 54.9%). However, we do not know what factors are involved in individuals' decisions to employ or disregard an available response or responses.

When we consider the focus or type of response, it seems that individuals prefer to deal with the content issues. Over half the responses subjects produced were content responses and, consequently, content was the dominant focus of response for most subjects. The next most popular response, in terms of number produced, was content and relationship, followed by relationship then procedural responses. It is interesting to note, however, that the order shifts when individuals indicate which responses they would actually use. When we compare the number of responses produced to the number of responses likely to be used we find that individuals retain, first, procedural responses (70.7%), followed by content and relationship (59.3%), content (57.2%), then relationship (52.6%) responses.

One reason for this shift in focus of responses may lie in the projected outcome of the response. That is, procedural responses most often constitute an attempt to deescalate the conflict (e.g. "This is

getting out of hand;" "Let's cool down and talk"). The same is true for several of the content and relationship responses (e.g. "I can tell this is really important to you, so I'll go home this weekend;" "I am just as desperate as you to have the apartment - why do you think I'm just trying to fight?"). Since the conversation had been getting more and more heated, those who would actually use the procedures response and, to a certain extent, the content and relationship response, may have thought that deescalation was in order before the content issue could be resolved.

Overall, subjects tended to avoid focusing solely on the relationship issue in their responses, even when that issue was perceived. When such responses were produced, subjects indicated that they would actually use just over half of them in a similar situation. This finding will be discussed further below.

The results of this study indicate no difference between men and women in either the ability to produce or the likelihood of actually using content responses. This finding contradicts Wilmot and Frost's (1978) assertion that men are inclined to focus on the content issues. On the other hand, there are differences between women and men in the ability to produce relationship responses. Women produced a significantly greater number of such responses, which may reflect the stereotypic "relational training" received by women, as suggested by Frost and Wilmot. However, when we consider relationship responses which subjects indicated they would actually use, the difference between men and women seems to disappear. The results reported in the last chapter where likely relationship responses served as the dependent variable, are somewhat misleading since these tests were based upon the total number

of likely responses (see p. 33). In fact, of the relationship responses generated, men indicated that they would actually use 51.6%, which does not differ noticeably from the 53.0% that women would actually use. Nonetheless, given that they do have the ability to produce more relationship responses, it seems that women have greater flexibility in dealing with conflict situations than do men.

Women and men also differed significantly in the number of procedural responses produced. Women generated two-thirds of these responses. Thus, it seems a greater number of women than men are more concerned with "how we could or should resolve this conflict." Additionally, as we indicated above, the use of this response may reflect a desire on the part of some women to deescalate the conflict. Men, on the other hand, seem more inclined to pursue the conflict with continued use of responses that focus on the content issues.

As indicated earlier, cognitively complex individuals generated more responses than did noncomplex individuals. This pattern held true when each type of response was considered. That is, complex individuals generated a greater mean number of content, content and relationship, relationship, and procedural responses. This was particularly true for relationship responses, where a significant effect for complexity emerged.

The relationship response obviously requires the individual to go beyond the content issues and focus on how this conflict affects perceptions of self, the other, and/or the relationship. Cognitively complex individuals are better able than noncomplex individuals to make this shift as they produce responses. Consequently, it might be expected that the chances for successful conflict resolution would be greater for

the former group. This would be a reasonable suggestion if cognitively complex individuals were also more likely, actually, to use the relationship responses that they produce. From subjects' ratings of responses, however, we find that this is not necessarily the case. Cognitively complex subjects indicated that they would actually use only 32 of the 75 (42.7%) relationship responses they produced. On the other hand, of the 39 relationship responses produced by noncomplex subjects, 28 (71.8%) were likely to be used. Thus, it appears that if a cognitively noncomplex individual can generate a relationship response, s/he is more likely to use it, whereas a complex individual is less likely to use the relationship responses s/he generates. The net effect, then, is that the rate of usage is the same for both groups, and we cannot predict that cognitively complex individuals would have greater chances than noncomplex individuals for successful conflict resolution. Again, it seems clear that further study of the factors involved in the selection of available responses is needed.

The Relationship Between Perceptions and Responses

There appears to be no relationship between the perception of the level(s) of interpersonal conflict and the focus of responses to another in that situation. The lack of correspondence obtained in this study can easily be accounted for by the above-mentioned fact that over one half of the responses which subjects produced were content responses. There are two, equally plausible explanations for the preponderance of the content response over the other three categories of responses.

For the first explanation we must return to Wilmot (1975) and Frost and Wilmot (1978). The reader will recall Wilmot's supposition

that individuals probably begin with the content dimensions and never fully discuss the relationship issues. Additionally, Frost and Wilmot speculate that, in a conflict situation, the relationship issue is usually ignored by one or both parties. The evidence from this investigation can be taken as support for the authors' speculations. In addition to the great number of content responses produced, the dominant focus of response for 79 of the 95 subjects was content. Moreover, of the 53 subjects who perceived both the content and relationship levels, 45 had a content dominant focus of response. Thus, it may be that even though an individual may "see" both levels of the conflict, s/he ignores the relationship issues when responding to the other.

The norm of reciprocity provides a second, plausible explanation for the large number of content responses. As Knapp (1978) states, "the norm of reciprocity suggests there is a strong tendency on the part of human beings to respond in kind to the behavior they receive" (p. 30; also see Wilmot, 1975, pp. 110-112; and Leary, 1955). It could be that, for the most part, subjects observed this norm as they produced responses to J.. Although J.'s last series of comments included both content and relationship statements (see Appendix A), his/her final statement was an ultimatum which would be coded as content: "T. and I can't go anywhere else and so we're going to the apartment whether you like it or not..." Now, in order for subjects to produce relationship or content and relationship responses, a shift away from the content level (and the norm of reciprocity) was required. A majority of subjects were either unable or unwilling to make this shift. Thus, even though a significant number of subjects perceived both levels of the conflict, the norm of reciprocity may have induced them to produce content responses. Either

of these explanations is plausible and only further research will enable us to determine which is the most reasonable.

Implications for Further Research

Perhaps the most significant contribution of this study lies in the operationalization of content and relationship levels. Although many have recognized the existence of these levels in isolated messages and in conflicts, it seems that researchers have shied away from the empirical study of content and relationship levels. Hopefully, I have demonstrated that there is a way to study these levels in perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict. I have shown the coding scheme which I designed to be a reliable method for identifying these levels and for coding perceptions and responses. Of course, the scheme would benefit from further research and refinement by testing other subject populations, employing different conflict situations, and formalizing tentative subcategories.

A possible limitation of the study is the fact that subjects were not actually involved in the interpersonal conflict. This fact does, in a sense, reduce the scope of my generalizations since we cannot know for sure how subjects perceive and respond to their own conflict situations. One might say we should obtain subjects who have an established relationship, engage them in an actual conflict, and then tape their interaction for later coding of content and relationship responses. In this case we would still have to rely on subjects' self-reports of their perceptions of the levels of the conflict. More importantly, it would be unethical for a researcher to tamper with individuals' relationships in such a manner, and so that type of study does not seem feasible.

Another possibility is to provide two subjects, either strangers or friends, with a conflict situation and ask them to role play the adversaries. The success of this method might depend too much upon the subjects' abilities to role play well. However, Rausch et al. (1974) have employed this method in a longitudinal study of married couples and demonstrated that it can be used rather successfully to study communication in conflict resolution. Aside from those situations where a researcher can train people to effectively role play an interpersonal conflict or where the individuals can practice role playing, the transcript method appears to be the best technique for studying individuals' perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict.

The results of this study provide several possibilities for further research. We now know that individuals differ in the ability to perceive the content and/or relationship levels of an interpersonal conflict but, at this point, cannot account for these differences. The evidence from this investigation suggests that a potentially fruitful avenue would be to conduct a similar study and obtain some measure of psychological gender (see, for example, Bem, 1977). Psychological gender might also be related to differences in response focus.

The relationship between cognitive complexity and perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict needs to be defined more clearly. For example, a study should be conducted using a different conflict situation so that we can be sure that the results obtained herein, with regard to cognitive complexity, are not idiosyncratic to the particular situation. Another type of study would be one employing a greater number of subjects so that we can more adequately determine whether or not

a relationship between cognitive complexity and the ability to produce procedural responses exists.

We should also seek to identify the factors involved in individuals' decisions to use or not use particular available responses in a conflict situation. To begin this identification it seems reasonable to suggest that subjects provide reasons for their choices of likely and unlikely responses. This will, no doubt, necessitate additional coding or categorizing, but could ultimately provide valuable insights for students of conflict resolution.

Finally, it seems most urgent to test the two plausible, alternative explanations for the finding that content responses account for over half of those produced by subjects in this study. The research question is: When responding to another in an interpersonal conflict, do individuals tend to ignore the relationship level (even when perceived), or do they adhere to the norm of reciprocity and match the focus of their responses to the focus of the adversary's immediately preceding statement? The answer to this question can be rather easily obtained. In the near future, I plan to conduct a study where subjects receive a transcript very similar to the one used in this investigation. The only difference will be that J.'s last comment will be a relationship statement only. If subjects provide a majority of content responses again, then we will have rather clear evidence for the first alternative, that individuals tend to ignore the relationship level. If a majority of subjects provide more relationship responses, we will have evidence for the second alternative, that individuals follow the norm of reciprocity.

In sum, this study has provided a significant first step toward understanding the content and relationship levels of interpersonal conflict. I plan to continue this research so that we can learn more about this fact of interpersonal life.

ENDNOTES

[1]A thorough discussion of the system designed for coding responses appears in Chapter 2, pp. 21-23, and in Appendix B.

[2]Werner posits an "orthogenetic principle" such that the development of cognition follows from a state of relative globality and undifferentiation to that of increased differentiation and hierarchic integration (see Crockett, 1965, for a fuller explanation).

[3]See, for example, Bieri, 1955; Tripodi and Bieri, 1964; Tripodi and Bieri, 1966; Schroder, Driver and Streufert, 1967; and Crano and Schroder, 1967.

[4]Personal Communication.

[5]I wish to express thanks to Kevin McClearey for creating the situation and most of the dialogue for the "transcript."

[6]Since females characteristically obtain higher complexity scores than do males, the medians are calculated separately to avoid confounding cognitive complexity with gender.

[7]Ms. Patty Hackney served as the second judge. Ms. Hackney has a considerable amount of experience with Crockett's scoring procedure. She agreed to do the reliability checks for all three measures for the study (i.e. complexity, perceptions of the levels of the conflict, and responses). A thank you is in order for her prompt, professional work.

[8]Gender was also an independent variable in another pair of repeated measures analyses of variance with focus of each response dependent, which will be reported later (see p. 37 and Tables C-20 and C-21). The results were similar to those reported here and so are not discussed.

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APPENDIX A

THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS LAWRENCE, KANSAS 66045

SPEECH AND DRAMA DEPARTMENT

- SPEECH COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN RELATIONS
- SPEECH PATHOLOGY AND AUDIOLOGY
- RADIO-TELEVISION-FILM
- THEATRE AND DRAMA

The Department of Speech and Drama supports the practice of protection of human subjects participating in research The following information is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in the present study You should be aware that even if you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time

The study is concerned with 1) impressions people have of their peers, 2) impressions people form of interpersonal situations, and 3) responses people make to others in similar situations First, you will be asked to describe some of your peers Then you will read a transcript of a conversation and then, later, how you would respond to this situation Your impressions and responses will be identified only by a code number, in other words, they will be anonymous

Your participation is solicited, but is strictly voluntary Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study Be assured that your name will not be associated in any way with the research findings We appreciate your cooperation very much

Sincerely,

Noreen M Carrocci

Noreen M Carrocci
Principal Investigator

_____ _____

Signature of student agreeing to participate Date

CODE # _____

SOCIAL PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

What is your sex? Male_____
Female_____

Our interest in this questionnaire is to learn how people describe others We are interested in knowing, in your own terms, the characteristics which a set of individuals have -- those which set one person off from another as an individual, and those characteristics which they share in common

Our concern here is with the habits, ideas, mannerisms, -- in general, with the personal characteristics, rather than the physical traits -- which characterize a number of different people

In order to make sure that you are describing real people, we have set down a list of two different categories of people In the blank space beside each category below, please write the initials, nicknames, or some identifying symbol for a person of your acquaintance who fits that category Be sure to use a different person for each category

1 A person your own age and sex whom you like _____
2 A person your own age and sex whom you dislike _____

Spend a few moments looking over this list, mentally comparing and contrasting the people you have in mind for each category Think of their habits, their beliefs, their mannerisms, their relations to others, any characteristics they have which you might use to describe them to other people

If you have any questions about the kinds of characteristics we are interested in, please ask

Do not turn the page until instructed to do so.

Please look back to the first sheet and place the symbol you have used to designate the person in category 1 here _____

Now describe this person as fully as you can Write down as many defining characteristics as you can Pay particular attention to his/her habits, beliefs, ways of treating others, mannerisms, and similar attributes Remember, describe him/her as completely as you can, so that a stranger might be able to determine the kind of person he/she is from your description Use the back of this page if necessary You will be given five minutes to complete your description

This person is

Please look back to the first sheet and place the symbol you have used to designate the person in category 2 here _____

Now describe this person as fully as you can Write down as many defining characteristics as you can Pay particular attention to his/her habits, beliefs, ways of treating others, mannerisms, and similar attributes Remember, describe him/her as completely as you can, so that a stranger might be able to determine the kind of person he/she is from your description Use the back of this page if necessary You will be given five minutes to complete your description

This person is

Please read the following transcript carefully It is a word-for-word record of an interaction between two roommates, J and M , that was tape-recorded while they were (they thought) waiting to participate in an experiment last year J and M were both sophomores, approximately the same age, and shared an off-campus, one bedroom apartment in Lawrence

* * * * * * *

J "We have to wait half an hour, huh?"

M "Yeah, what a drag "

J "I wish I'd known this was gonna happen I would've brought my books so I could study "

M "Me, too Oh, well, I'm gonna hit the books this weekend anyway "

J "Oh yeah? You gonna take stuff home with you?"

M "What do you mean? My stuff's already at the apartment all of it I didn't bring anything up here with me today "

J "I know I mean are you takin' all those books home with you to your parents' place You don't usually get much studying done there "

M "I'm not going home this weekend, J I'm too far behind if I get caught up this weekend, I can go home next weekend without sweating it "

J "Yeah yeah well, I was kind of figuring you were going home, so I invited T to come over to spend the weekend at the apartment and "

M (Interrupting) "You what!"

J "I invited T to spend the weekend We haven't had any place to be alone together since we started going together and so "

M (Interrupting) "I don't believe you did that without asking me You and T are always together always at the apartment I haven't been able to study or sleep or

J (Interrupting) "Aw, come on, M We hang out there sometimes, but it's the only place we've got to go this weekend we just want some time alone and "

M (Interrupting) "Time alone, huh? That's great what the hell am I supposed to do while you two are making it all weekend in the apartment it's mine too, y'know do I have to sleep on the floor? or in the hall? I mean

J (Interrupting) "What's wrong with the couch, huh? you and I've both slept there plenty of times after parties and stuff and "

M (Interrupting) "Yeah, well, that's different that was you and me, when we used to do things together before you went off the deep end with T and "

J (Interrupting) "Whaddya mean, the deep end? I love T and ."

M (Interrupting) "I mean the deep end you're with T every minute you and me never talk we never eat together we haven't been out partying together you don't even help keep the place clean or cook or shop and now you want me out so you can have the whole place for the whole weekend I think that's really crappy and "

J (Interrupting) "Hold on just a minute I didn't want you out . you said you were going home for the weekend to see your family, and "

M (Interrupting) "Well, I'm not going, and I never said I was for sure I'm gonna lock myself in and study and "

J (Interrupting) "Not if I get there first, you're not I told T that we had the place for the weekend and we're gonna have it "

* * * * * * *

On the next page, we would like you to give your impression of what this conversation is about as fully as you can Your account of this conversation will be an important source of information for us, so please be as clear and thorough as you can when you write You will be given five minutes to complete your account of this conversation

CODE # _____

Conversation Between J and M

Please do not turn to the next page until instructed to do so

The conversation between J and M continued The first exchange here is from the previous section of the transcript to help you remember what was happening in the interaction

* * * * * * *

M (Interrupting) "Well, I'm not going and I never said I was for sure I'm gonna lock myself in and study and "

J (Interrupting) "Not if I get there first, you're not I told T that we had the place for the weekend and we're gonna have it "

M (Interrupting) "Hey, this is really great I'm gonna end up camping out at the apartment for the rest of the week just so I don't get thrown out and so I can have a few hours of peace and quiet to study this weekend without being bugged by "

J (Interrupting) "By me and T., right? How do you think it feels to me, having to make a big deal about getting a little privacy just for once? But, no, you have to study you could do that at the library T and I can't go anywhere else and so we're going to the apartment whether you like it or not "

* * * * * * *

Now, put yourself in M 's place Read back over the section of the transcript above and let yourself <u>be</u> M --- let yourself hear J responding to you When you get to J 's last statement (" and so we're going to the apartment whether you like it or not "), really put yourself in M 's place and hear those words directed at <u>you</u>

Then, using the spaces provided on the next page, write as many different responses to J as you can think of --- you will have 10 minutes In other words, take 10 minutes to write as many different responses to J as you (<u>being M</u>) can think of Put your responses in quotation marks and write them down just as you would say them

Responses to J

CODE # _____

_____1

_____2

_____3

_____4

_____5

_____6

_____7

_____8

_____9

_____10

_____11

_____12

_____13

_____14

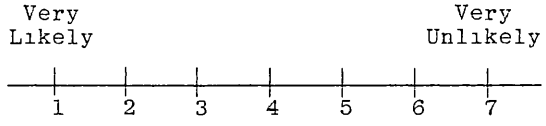
_____15

(If you need space for more responses, use the back of the preceding page)

Please do not turn to the next page until instructed to do so

Now we would like you to consider each response you have listed on the preceding page Specifically, we would like you to indicate how likely you would be to actually use each of these responses in a situation like this

Before each of your responses on the preceding page, there is a blank space We would like you to use that space to indicate how likely you would be to actually use each response, using the continuum which follows



If you think you would be very likely to use a response, place the number 1 in the space provided If you think you would be very unlikely to use a response, place the number 7 in the space provided Of course, numbers 2 through 6 may be used to indicate degrees of likelihood less extreme than those indicated by the numbers 1 and 7

Now, go back to the preceding page and fill in the blank spaces next to each of your responses

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Thank you very much for participating in this study This statement is given so that you may more fully understand the purposes of this investigation The primary interest of the study is to explore certain aspects of interpersonal conflict Conflict is an inevitable part of any interpersonal relationship, yet we know little about people's perceptions of and responses to interpersonal conflict situations Through this investigation we hope to be able to contribute some information on these topics

Various communication scholars have suggested that there are two levels of interpersonal conflict 1) the content level, which reflects the actual, manifest issue(s) between people (for J and M , one content issue was the use of the apartment for the weekend), and 2) the relationship level, which reflects conflict regarding the individuals' perceptions of their relationship, each other, and themselves (for J and M , one relationship issue was M 's perception that he/she and J. don't spend enough time together since J starting seeing T)

One purpose of the study is to explore people's perceptions of these two levels of an interpersonal conflict The transcript you were given was, of course, an example of two people engaged in conflict All written impressions of J and M 's conversation will be studied to determine whether or not people tend to perceive the content, relationship or both levels of an interpersonal conflict

A second purpose of this study is to explore people's responses to an interpersonal conflict situation. The first interest is focus of responses - whether they are directed to the content, relationship or both levels of the conflict situation All responses to J will be coded to determine which level people tend to focus on, and to see if there is a relationship between perception of levels of an interpersonal conflict and focus of response Also, we will study the relationship between focus of responses and likelihood that each response would actually be used

The third purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between perception of levels of an interpersonal conflict, responses to an interpersonal conflict situation and cognitive complexity Cognitive complexity refers to the range of constructs available to an individual for describing his/her interpersonal world Researchers have found that individuals differ in degrees of cognitive complexity The descriptions from the "Social Perception Questionnaire" will provide measures of cognitive complexity We will then try to discern whether or not degree of cognitive complexity is related to 1) people's perceptions of the level of interpersonal conflict, and 2) the number and focus of responses to that situation

In a few weeks analysis of all the data from the study will be completed If you would like to know the results of the study, please feel free to stop by my office, 3107 Wescoe, or call me at 864-3633 Thank you again for your participation

Sincerely,

Noreen M Carrocci

Noreen M Carrocci

APPENDIX B

CODING SCHEME

Coding Impressions of the Conversation

Each subject's impression of the conversation will, if possible, be coded as: Content, Relationship, or Content and Relationship.

Content - An impression is coded as content if it includes perceptions of a struggle between J. and M. over incompatible goals, scarce rewards, and/or interference from the other in achieving goals (henceforth, content = C).

1) Goals -- J: wants the apartment for the weekend for s/he and T. only.
   M: wants to stay at the apartment and study for the weekend.
2) Rewards -- J: limited time and space to be alone with T. and have privacy.
   M: need for a quiet place for the weekend to get caught up on studies.
3) Interference -- J: if M. stays, J. and T. will not be alone and, thus, will have no privacy.
   M: if J. and T. are at the apartment over the weekend, M. will not have a quiet place to study and get caught up, and no place to sleep.

Relationship - An impression is coded as relationship if it reflects perceptions of how J. and M. see themselves, one another and/or their relationship. Specifically, code relationship if it includes: 1) how M. sees M.; 2) how M. sees J.; 3) how M. sees J. seeing M.; 4) how M. sees M.'s and J.'s relationship; and/or 5) how M. sees J.'s and T.'s relationship (henceforth, relationship = R).

Content and Relationship - An impression is coded as content and relationship if it reflects perceptions of content issues and relationship issues. Specifically, if an impression includes statements that fulfill at least one of the criteria from the content and relationship categories, it will be coded as content and relationship (henceforth, content and relationship = C & R).

Special Notes

1) If a subject indicates what s/he would do in this situation, it is regarded as anecdotal and, thus, is not coded as C or R. (see #3)
   Example: "If I were M. I would go home."

2) If a subject indicates what J. or M. should or should not have done or assumed, it is most often a reflection of the content issue(s), and is coded C.
   Example: "J. shouldn't have assumed M. was leaving," "J. shouldn't have invited T. without asking."

3) All anecdotal statements are not regarded as codeable.
   Example: "I can understand how this could happen between two roommates;" "This has happened to me before."

4) The use of communication principles to analyze the conversation is not regarded as codeable.
   Example: "Neither J. nor M. were listening to one another;" "They interrupted one another, and should have used paraphrasing."

Example of C impression: "J. invited T. over for the weekend, thinking M. would be gone, but M. decided to stay, so they are arguing over who will get the apartment."

Example of R impression: "M. seems to be jealous of T. and J. She feels hurt and rejected because she and J. don't do anything together anymore."

Example of C & R impression: "J. and M. started arguing over who would get the apartment for the weekend, and then it comes out that M. feels jealous of T. and J..

Coding Responses

Content - A response is coded as content if it includes a reference to goals, scarce rewards and/or interference from the other in achieving goals (as described for "Coding Impressions of the Conversation").

Relationship - A response is coded as relationship if it refers to: 1) how M. sees M.; 2) how M. sees J.; 3) how M. sees J. seeing M.; 4) how M. sees M.'s and J.'s relationship; and how M. sees J.'s and T.'s relationship (as described for "Impressions").

Content and Relationship - A response is coded as content and relationship if it fulfills at least one of the criteria from both the content and relationship categories.

Procedures - A response is coded as procedures if it refers to how we might or might have, could or could have, should or should have handle(d) this conflict.

Special Notes

A. Content

1) Some "subcategories," or sure tip-offs that a response is content are: 1) reference to "my" or "our" apartment; 2) reference to J. and T. going elsewhere [e.g. T.'s place, motel, etc.]; 3) refusals; 4) threats or implied threats, denials; 5) references to "chores and cleaning;" 6) references to "needing to study," and "at the apartment;" 7) requests; and 8) sarcasm.

2) Statements that request or suggest a compromise and include one are coded content rather than procedures.
Example: "What do you say we compromise? I'll take the apartment on Friday, and you can have it Saturday."
**There are two exceptions to this rule: 1) if a response merely suggests or requests a compromise, it is coded as procedures [e.g. "Let's compromise." "Let's make some kind of deal."]; and 2) if a response suggests that M. will propose a compromise and then ask for J.'s reaction to it, it is coded as procedures [e.g. "Look, J., how about if I propose a compromise and then you tell me what you think."].

3) Responses that refer to M.'s or J.'s "rights" are coded as content.
Example: "You have no right to keep the apartment all weekend," "I have rights too, ya' know."

4) If a response suggests that J. get his/her own place with T., or requests J.'s opinion as to whether or not one of them should move out, it is regarded as a statement or question that suggests a solution to the problem of scarce rewards and, thus, is coded as content.
Example: "Why don't you get your own place with T.?" "Should one of us move out?" "Why don't you move out?"
**There is one exception to this rule: if a response is a declaration of M.'s moving, it is regarded as a threat or declaration of the end of the relationship, and is coded as relationship [e.g. "I've had it! I'm moving out!"].

B. Relationship

1) Some "subcategories" or sure tip-offs that it is relationship are: 1) labeling or blaming J.; 2) reference to perception of both M.'s and J.'s behavior; 3) reference to M.'s and J.'s relationship; 4) threat to end M.'s and J.'s relationship; 5) request for information regarding J.'s perceptions and/or feelings - how J. sees himself/herself, his/her relationship with M. or T..
Examples of 1) "You're being unfair;" 2) "Aren't we both acting like children?" 3) "We used to be such good friends;" 4) "If you keep treating me like this, our friendship is over;" 5) "Do you love T?" "Do you value our friendship?"

C. Content and Relationship

1) Some "subcategories" are: 1) how M. sees J. acting (state), and reference to M.'s goals; 2) how M. sees J. as a person (trait), and reference to M.'s goals; 3) how M. sees J. (state or trait) and reference to J.'s goals; 4) how M. sees M. and reference to M.'s or J.'s goals; 5) denials of J. and/or the issues.
Examples of: 1) "You really are being inconsiderate. Can't you see that I need to study this weekend?" 2) "You are really immature. Now, I need the apartment this weekend;" 3) "You are being so selfish - you can have privacy with T. some other weekend;" 4) "Don't you know how lonely it is for me without a girlfriend? But no, you need your privacy with T.;" 5) "Go to hell!" "Eat my shorts!"

2) Responses which include relationship references primarily, but also indicate content issues, are coded as content and relationship.
Example: "I can't believe you're being so selfish about this!"
"You are being such a baby about this weekend."

D. Procedures

1) Some "subcategories" are: 1) suggestion about how to deal with the issue; 2) comment on escalation of the conflict; 3) response suggesting how we could have solved this conflict.
Examples of: 1) "Why don't we talk about this later?" 2) "This is really getting out of hand;" 3) "If you had asked me first, none of this would have happened."

APPENDIX C

Table C-1
Frequency Distribution of Responses Generated

All Subjects

Number of Responses	Frequency/# of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects	Cumulative Frequency(%)
3	2	2.1	2.1
4	3	3.2	5.3
5	8	8.4	13.7
6	9	9.5	23.2
7	12	12.6	35.8
8	8	8.4	44.2
9	6	6.3	50.5
10	17	17.9	68.4
11	11	11.6	80.0
12	4	4.2	84.2
13	5	5.3	89.5
14	5	5.3	94.7
15	4	4.2	98.9
16	1	1.1	100.0

Mean - 9.095 Range = 13.00 Standard Deviation = 3.105

N = 95

Table C-2
Frequency Distribution of Responses Generated

Female Subjects

Number of Responses	Frequency/# of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects	Cumulative Frequency(%)
5	4	7.7	7.7
6	3	5.8	13.5
7	8	15.4	28.8
8	5	9.6	38.5
9	3	5.8	44.2
10	8	15.4	59.6
11	8	15.4	75.0
12	2	3.8	78.8
13	2	3.8	82.7
14	4	7.7	90.4
15	4	7.7	98.1
16	1	1.9	100.0

Mean = 9.827 Range - 11.00 Standard Deviation = 3.053

N = 52

Table C-3
Frequency Distribution of Responses Generated

Male Subjects

Number of Responses	Frequency/# of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects	Cumulative Frequency(%)
3	2	4.7	4.7
4	3	7.0	11.6
5	4	9.3	20.9
6	6	14.0	34.9
7	4	9.3	44.2
8	3	7.0	51.2
9	3	7.0	58.1
10	9	20.9	79.1
11	3	7.0	86.0
12	2	4.7	90.7
13	3	7.0	97.7
14	1	2.3	100.00

Mean = 8.209 Range = 11.00 Standard Deviation = 2.965

Table C-4
Perceptions of the Conflict by Gender

Perception[1]	Gender		Total
	Men	Women	
C	18(41.9%)	14(26.9%)	32
R	5(11.6%)	4(7.7%)	9
C&R	19(44.2%)	34(65.4%)	53
Total	42	52	94[2]

Chi-square = 3.83598, d.f. = 2, $p < .1469$(n.s.)

[1] C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content and Relationship

[2] One perception was uncodeable and was disqualified from the analysis

Table C-5
Perceptions of Levels of Conflict
by Dominant Focus of Responses

Perception[1]	Dominant Focus of Response[2]				Total
	C	R	C&R	P	
C	28	1	2	1	32
R	5	2	2	0	9
C&R	45	4	4	0	53
Total	78	7	8	1	94

Chi-square = 8.53566, d.f. = 6, $p < .2014$ (n.s.)

[1&2]C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship; P = Procedures.

Table C-6
Perceptions of Levels of Conflict by
Dominant Focus of Likely Responses

Perception[1]	Dominant Focus of Likely Response[2]				Total
	C	R	C&R	P	
C	26	0	2	3	31
R	5	1	3	0	9
C&R	39	4	7	2	52
Total	70	5	12	5	92[3]

Chi-square = 9.09713, d.f. = 6, $p < .1682$ (n.s.)

[1&2]C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship; P = Procedures.

[3]Two subjects failed to rate properly their responses for likelihood and were disqualified from the analysis.

Table C-7
Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance:
Gender by Perceptions, All Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Mean	1198.58612	1	1198.58612	518.73185	0.
Gender	15.49185	1	15.49185	6.70466	.011*
Perception	5.90956	2	2.95478	1.27879	.283
G X P	2.61591	2	1.30796	.56607	.570
Error	203.33353	88	2.31061		
Responses	650.56230	3	216.85410	66.769575	0.
R X G	6.26536	3	2.08845	.64304	.588
R X P	13.56704	6	2.26117	.69622	.653
R X G X P	9.51078	6	1.58513	.48806	.817
Error	857.41644	264	3.24779		

Table C-8
Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance:
Gender by Perceptions, Likely Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Mean	419.67937	1	419.67937	219.15064	0.
Gender	5.30217	1	5.30217	2.76872	.100
Perception	8.02371	2	4.01186	2.09494	.129
G X P	.80871	2	.40435	.21115	.810
Error	168.52237	88	1.91503		
Responses	196.49691	3	65.49897	38.94255	0.
R X G	1.85875	3	.61958	.36837	.776
R X P	13.36129	6	2.22688	1.32400	.247
R X G X P	9.85822	6	1.64304	.97687	.441
Error	444.03169	264	1.68194		

Table C-9
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Content Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	.922	1	.922	.130	.719
Complexity	10.763	1	10.763	1.522	.220
G X C	.345	1	.345	.049	.826
Error	643.498	91	7.071		
Total	655.432	94	6.973		

Table C-10
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Likely Content Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	3.490	1	3.490	.937	.336
Complexity	.724	1	.724	.194	.660
G X C	2.806	1	2.806	.753	.388
Error	339.028	91	3.726		
Total	346.000	94	3.681		

Table C-11
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Relationship Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	18.445	1	18.445	8.982	.004*
Complexity	9.915	1	9.915	4.828	.031*
G X C	.386	1	.386	.188	.666
Error	186.869	91	2.054		
Total	215.200	94	2.289		

Table C-12
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Likely Relationship Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	5.297	1	5.297	3.87	.052
Complexity	.015	1	.015	.011	.917
G X C	.235	1	.235	.171	.68
Error	124.566	91	1.369		
Total	130.105	94	1.384		

Table C-13
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Content and Relationship Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	.746	1	.746	.426	.516
Complexity	1.017	1	1.017	.580	.448
G X C	4.041	1	4.041	2.306	.132
Error	159.444	91	1.752		
Total	165.221	94	1.758		

Table C-14
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Likely Content and Relationship Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	2.435	1	2.435	2.016	.159
Complexity	.344	1	.344	.285	.595
G X C	2.316	1	2.316	1.918	.170
Error	109.881	91	1.207		
Total	114.947	94	1.223		

Table C-15
Cognitive Complexity by
Perceptions of the Conflict

Cognitive Complexity	Perception[1]			Total
	C	R	C&R	
Complex	18	7	25	50
Noncomplex	14	2	28	44
Total	32	9	53	94[2]

Chi-square = 3.08, d.f. = 2, $p < .30$ (n.s.)

[1] C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content and Relationship

[2] One perception was uncodeable.

Table C-16
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity
Total Number of Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	63.570	1	63.570	7.678	.077*
Complexity	77.577	1	77.577	9.343	.003*
G X C	11.402	1	11.402	1.373	.244
Error	755.580	91	8.303		
Total	906.147	94	9.640		

Table C-17
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity,
Total Number of Likely Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	48.780	1	48.780	6.436	.013*
Complexity	8.031	1	8.031	1.060	.306
G X C	13.805	1	13.805	1.821	.181
Error	689.735	91	7.580		
Total	759.747	94	8.082		

Table C-18
Cognitive Complexity by
Dominant Focus of Responses

Cognitive Complexity	Dominant Focus of Response[1]				Total
	C	R	C&R	P	
Complex	42	4	3	1	50
Noncomplex	37	3	5	0	45
Total	79	7	8	1	95

Chi-square = 1.70087, d.f. = 3, p < .6367(n.s.)

[1]C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship;
P = Procedures.

Table C-19
Cognitive Complexity by Dominant
Focus of Likely Responses

Cognitive Complexity	Dominant Focus of Likely Response[1]				Total
	C	R	C&R	P	
Complex	37	2	7	3	49
Noncomplex	34	3	5	2	44
Total	71	5	12	5	93[2]

Chi-square = .59299, d.f. = 3, p < .8980(n.s.)

[1]C = Content; R = Relationship; C&R = Content & Relationship;
P = Procedures.

[2]Two subjects failed to rate properly their responses for likelihood and were disqualified from the analysis.

Table C-20
Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance:
Complexity by Gender, All Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Mean	1890.17622	1	1890.17622	910.59129	0.
Complexity	17.81331	1	17.81331	8.58155	.004*
Gender	15.14825	1	15.14825	7.29766	.008*
C X G	2.85049	1	2.85049	1.37322	.244
Error	188.89488	91	2.07577		
Responses	1162.60542	3	387.53484	121.13199	0.
R X C	4.40781	3	1.46927	.45925	.711
R X G	7.80202	3	2.60067	.81289	.488
R X C X G	1.94547	3	.64849	.20270	.894
Error	873.40726	273	3.19928		

Table C-21
Summary of Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance:
Complexity by Gender, Likely Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Mean	639.00904	1	639.00904	337.22999	0.
Complexity	1.51600	1	1.51600	.80005	.373
Gender	11.44742	1	11.44742	6.04125	.016*
C X G	3.45120	1	3.45120	1.82133	.181
Error	172.43372	91	1.89488		
Responses	368.27887	3	122.75962	72.48950	0.
R X C	.54538	3	.18179	.10735	.956
R X G	.70028	3	.23343	.13784	.937
R X C X G	2.91087	3	.97029	.57296	.633
Error	462.32045	273	1.69348		

Table C-22
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Procedural Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	3.480	1	3.480	4.369	.039*
Complexity	1.877	1	1.877	2.356	.128
G X C	.025	1	.025	.032	.859
Error	72.486	91	.797		
Total	77.789	94	.828		

Table C-23
Summary of Analysis of Variance: Gender by Complexity, Likely Procedural Responses Dependent

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	(p) F
Gender	1.573	1	1.573	2.336	.130
Complexity	1.623	1	1.623	2.410	.124
G X C	1.006	1	1.006	1.493	.225
Error	61.279	91	.673		
Total	65.432	94	.696		