

Relational Bond and Relational Position:

How Relational Types Differ Across a Multi-Dimensional Space

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Abstract

The current research examines how relational types vary along relational qualities. Participants rated 13 relational types (e.g., significant others, siblings, medical doctors, acquaintances, etc.) along eight relational qualities (e.g., relative power, closeness, etc.). Results indicated that the 13 relational types were similar and different within each of the eight relational qualities. Also, certain relational types demonstrated similarities (e.g., grandparents and friends) regarding the eight relational qualities *overall*, while others demonstrated differences (e.g., bosses and service people). Finally, three dimensions accounted for the similarities and difference among the relational types—relational bond (i.e., affiliation, closeness), relational position (e.g., relative power, dominance), and a third dimension undefined by the data. Two dimensions that account for variance among unique relationships also account for variance among relational types.

### Relational Bond and Relational Position:

#### How Relational Types Differ Across a Multi-Dimensional Space

Relationships play an integral role in communication. Individuals' communicative patterns greatly depend on the individuals to whom the message is addressed and on the nature of the relationship between the message sender and the message recipient (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Berger & Bradac, 1982; Brown & Levenson, 1987; Fussell & Krauss, 1989b). Relationships differ in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 1996; Stiles, 1980). While these relational differences manifest in various behaviors, conversations, goals, bonds, lengths, and other aspects, individuals have a sense of relational types; relational types are associated with easily identifiable attributes that are both common to, and distinguish, the various relational types (Marwell & Hage, 1970; Wilmot & Baxter, 1984, 1989; Wish, Deutsch, & Kaplan, 1976). Just as unique relationships differ in terms of various qualities (e.g., power, task-orientation, distance, etc.) that are associated with the specific relation between relational partners, relational types also vary along these dimensions (Knapp, Ellis, & Williams, 1980; Wish et al., 1976). The current paper tests which relational qualities adhere to different relational types, if relational types are similar across relational qualities overall, and which of various relational qualities account for variance in the relational types in multi-dimensional space.

#### *Relational Communication and Dimensions*

Relational communication varies along assorted dimensions of relational qualities. These characteristics include such dimensions as dominance, power, control, friendliness, task-orientation, liking, intimacy or closeness, affection-hostility, intensity of involvement, depth,

awkwardness, smoothness, superficiality, formality, similarity, difficulty/efficiency, and others (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Baxter, 1983; Baxter & Wilmot, 1983; Brown & Levenson, 1987; Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Canary, Stafford, Semic, 2002; Dillard, Solomon & Palmer, 1999; Dillard, Solomon, & Samp, 1996; Duck, Rutt, Hurst, & Strejc, 1991; Knapp et al., 1980; Planalp, 1993; Planalp & Benson, 1992; Solomon, Dillard, & Anderson, 2002; Stafford & Canary, 1991; Stiles, 1980; Tolhuizen, 1986). Perhaps one of the most comprehensive accounts of relational communication is by Burgoon and Hale (1984, 1987). They posited and empirically confirmed eight distinct dimensions (or topoi) for relationships and, in particular, relational communication. These dimensions, measured via the Relational Messages Scale (Burgoon & Hale, 1987), include affection, similarity, trust, composure, formality, dominance, quality, and task-orientation. These eight dimensions of relational qualities account for similarities and differences in relationships and influence the communication that occurs within them.

Dillard, Solomon, and colleagues (Dillard et al., 1996, 1999; Solomon et al., 2002) recently have critiqued Burgoon and Hale's classic conceptualization of relational communication, asserting that, while their "work represents the most nuanced and elaborated view of relational communication to date, the topoi [i.e., dimensions] constitute a list rather than a theoretically inter-related set of concepts" (Dillard et al., 1999, p. 51). In support of this critique and based on evolutionary theory (e.g., inclusive fitness), they argued that two dimensions account for variance in human perceptions of relational communication—affiliation (e.g., liking, closeness, bond, etc.) and dominance (e.g., power, position, status, etc.). Affiliation and dominance, in other words, sufficiently and exhaustively account for similarities and differences in relationships and relational communication. By subjecting participants' responses to the Relational Messages Scale to first- and second-order factor analyses, Dillard and

colleagues (1999) confirmed their two-dimensional conceptualization of relational communication. The affiliation dimension incorporated six of the Relational Message subscales, including similarity, affect, receptivity, equality, composure, and formality. The dominance dimension, on the other hand, included the dominance subscale, suggesting that it also includes factors such as rank, status, power, and authority. Thus, while Burgoon and Hale (1984, 1987) demonstrated that relational communication varies along eight dimensions, Dillard et al. (1999) confirmed that these eight dimensions can be reduced to and incorporated into two primary dimensions of affiliation and dominance to account for variance among relationships and relational communication.

#### *Relational Types and Dimensions*

Relational communication and, specifically, relationships are organized as falling into particular types. Individuals, in other words, view relationships according to a variety of types, terms, labels, or other general categories (Knapp et al., 1980; Planalp, 1993; Planalp & Benson, 1992; Stiles, 1980; Wish et al., 1976). Relational types include close friends, service people-customer, significant others, coworkers, boss/supervisor-employee, professor-student, parent-child, siblings, therapist/counselor-client, acquaintances, and other types. Relational types represent a generalized or averaged view of how relationships typically are. Despite the fact that relational types are imprecise in their boundaries, contain much variance, and are not mutually exclusive (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Dillard et al., 1999; Tolhuizen, 1986; Wilmot, 1995), relational types are commonly used by individuals to organize, apply meaning to, and describe interactions with others (Marwell & Hage, 1970; Wilmot & Baxter, 1984, 1989; Wish, et al., 1976). In fact, certain scholars contend that individuals cognitively represent relationships and associated phenomena as schemata which include knowledge about particular types of

relationships (Planalp, 1985). People distinguish their relationships with others, not just uniquely, but also according to type.

Similar to relational communication and relationships, relational types also vary along dimensions of relational qualities. Relational types exhibit similarities and differences along dimension of intimacy, awkwardness, relative power (i.e., equal versus unequal), cooperativeness (i.e., friendliness), competitiveness, intensity, superficiality, task-orientation, and other dimensions (Knapp et al., 1980; Wish et al., 1976). For example, intimacy ranges from those relational types that are high in intimacy, such as significant others and close friends, to those that are low in intimacy, such as acquaintances and bosses (Knapp et al., 1980). Further, certain relational types, such as professor-student and boss-employee, have relatively more power differentials than others, such as significant others and coworkers. Relational types demonstrate similarities and differences regarding relational qualities.

Extending the conceptualization of relational communication by Dillard et al. (1999) to relational types suggests that relational types also may vary along a limited set of dimensions. Specifically, affiliation (i.e., the bond between relational partners) and dominance (i.e., the relative position of relational partners) both may account for similarities and difference among relational types. These two relational qualities, in other words, should sufficiently account for the variance among relational types, as they do for variance among relationships and relational communication. The current research, thus, tests (i) what similarities and differences exist for 13 relational types *within* each of eight relational qualities; (ii) if and how relational types group together in terms of their similarities and differences across the eight relational qualities *overall*; and (iii) which of the relational qualities account for variance among the relational types in a multi-dimensional space.

## Methods

We used a survey to examine 13 relational types across eight relational qualities.

### *Participants*

Sixty-three undergraduate students (38.1% male; mean age = 20.87), enrolled in a lower division communication course at a western university during a summer session, received extra course credit for completing the survey. Of the 63 participants, 58.7% were of Caucasian descent, 17.4% of Asian descent, 7.9% of Latino descent, and the remaining participants were of other descents.

### *Relational Types*

We examined the following relational types: acquaintances, bosses, counselors (e.g., therapists, religious advisors), coworkers, grandparents, medical doctors, parents, professors, service people, siblings, significant others, very close friends, and young children (i.e., younger than 12 years and not a sibling). These relational types represent those commonly examined in prior research (see, e.g., Knapp et al., 1980; Wish et al., 1976).

### *Relational Qualities*

We examined relational types along the following relational qualities representing those qualities typically examined: awkwardness of relational type, benefit of relational type, emotional closeness of relational type, task-orientation of relational type, superficiality of relational type, similarity of one's self to relational type partner, liking of relational type partner, and relative power in relational type. Measures for these relational qualities were operationalized respectively as: awkward versus smooth, beneficial (i.e., rewarding), emotionally close, task-orientated (as opposed to socially-oriented), superficial (i.e., surface, shallow, without depth), similar (i.e., alike), like, and power and control. Each of the eight relational qualities used a

separate question, each of which assessed each relational quality for all 13 relational types. Each relational quality question directed participants to focus on how they generally would rate a variety of types of relationships regarding the specific relational quality, followed by instruction on how to use the particular scale for rating the 13 different relational types.

For each of the relational *qualities*, a seven point scale for each relational *type* ranged from one (not at all) to seven (very; e.g., not at all emotionally close = 1; very emotionally close = 7), with the exception of two relational qualities (i.e., relative power in relational type and awkwardness of relational type). The relative power scale ranged from negative three (i.e., less power and control) to positive three (i.e., more power and control) with zero as the midpoint (i.e., equal power and control), whereas the awkwardness scale ranged from negative three (i.e., awkward) to positive three (i.e., smooth) with zero as the midpoint (i.e., neither awkward nor smooth). Each of these two scales for each of the 13 different relational types was transformed into a seven point scale (i.e., 1 to 7) with high levels of the measure at the high end of the scales (i.e., 7 = more power and control for respondent; 7 = awkward).

### *Conversation Frequencies*

Participants also gave their best estimate regarding the number of days within the past 12 months they have had an extend (rather than passing) conversation with each of the 13 relational types. These data, however, were not included in the current analyses.

### *Survey Construction*

Each survey packet contained 10 pages in total. Each of the eight relational quality questions (e.g., awkwardness, relative power, etc.) was on a separate page—one for each of the eight relational qualities. Two additional pages were included: i) a page containing instructions for the survey packet; and ii) a page containing the conversation frequency and demographic

questions. Each of the eight pages, with a different relational quality question, was randomly ordered for each participant to prevent systematic responses across participants. However, the instruction page was always the first page and the page containing conversation frequency and demographic questions was always the last page of the survey packet. Ex post facto analysis of completed surveys confirmed that the random order of relational quality scales maintained across participants,  $\chi^2(49) = 66.16, n.s.$  In order to prevent systematic responding within each relational quality question, relational types (e.g., medical doctors, acquaintances, etc.) were randomly ordered within each relational quality question. Each participant completed a survey with a different order of the 13 relational types for each relational quality question and a different random order of the eight relational quality questions, which helped remove response order effects.

#### *Procedures*

Participants received survey packets to complete and return within a week. The instructions on the survey packets first informed participants that the research dealt with their perceptions of different types of interpersonal relationships. Participants were directed to base their answers on what is common and usual rather than on what is possible or exceptional; participants also were told to indicate how they typically perceived relationships with these different types of people. Participants spent approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete a survey packet.

#### Results

Various statistical analyses reported below allude to which relational types are similar and which are different within each relationship quality, if relational types can be grouped in terms of the similarities across the relational qualities overall, and which of the relational

qualities account for variance among the relational types in a multi-dimensional space.

#### *Qualities of Relational Types*

We conducted eight repeated measure analyses of variance (ANOVAs), one for each relational quality across the 13 relational types, in order to determine which relationships differed and which did not within each of the eight relational qualities. Table 1 (see next page) records the results of the eight repeated measure ANOVAs. The thirteen relational types differed significantly and strongly along each of the eight relational qualities. Post hoc analyses (with Bonferroni adjustments) revealed that relational types low in power and emotional closeness; medium in similarity, liking, benefit, superficiality, and awkwardness; and high in task-orientation included those with bosses, professors, and medical doctors. Relational types low in task-orientation, superficiality, and awkwardness; medium in power; and high in emotional closeness, similarity, liking, and benefit were those with siblings, significant others, and very close friends. Relational types in the midrange of emotional closeness, similarity, liking, benefit, superficiality, and awkwardness were those with acquaintances, coworkers, and young children. The 13 relational types demonstrated similarities and differences within each of the eight relational qualities.

#### *Simultaneous Similarities and Differences*

In addition to examining similarities and differences between relational types within each of the eight relational qualities, we determined if relational types were similar *overall* (i.e., across the eight relational qualities considered simultaneously). Using hierarchical cluster analysis with average linkage between groups as the clustering criterion, we determined which relational types were simultaneously similar across the eight relational qualities. Analysis of the fusion coefficients (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984) revealed six and four cluster solutions. The

Table 1.

## Qualities of Relational Types

		<u>Relational Qualities</u>															
		<i>Awkwardness</i>		<i>Benefit</i>		<i>Emotional Closeness</i>		<i>Liking</i>		<i>Relative Power</i>		<i>Similarity</i>		<i>Superficiality</i>		<i>Task-Orientation</i>	
<b>Relational Types</b>	<i>Acquaintance</i>	3.06 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.43 <sup>c</sup>	M+	3.57 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.92 <sup>a</sup>	M+	4.57 <sup>c</sup>	M+	4.29 <sup>c</sup>	M+	4.30 <sup>d</sup>	M+	3.32 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Boss</i>	3.43 <sup>c</sup>	M-	5.02 <sup>c</sup>	M+	2.59 <sup>b</sup>	L+	4.13 <sup>a</sup>	M+	2.63 <sup>a</sup>	L+	3.17 <sup>a</sup>	M-	4.67 <sup>d</sup>	M+	5.98 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Counselor</i>	3.70 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.77 <sup>c</sup>	M+	3.63 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.52 <sup>a</sup>	M+	3.41 <sup>b</sup>	M-	3.02 <sup>a</sup>	M-	3.70 <sup>c</sup>	M-	5.10 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Coworker</i>	2.78 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.98 <sup>c</sup>	M+	3.59 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.84 <sup>a</sup>	M+	4.48 <sup>c</sup>	M+	3.92 <sup>b</sup>	M	4.44 <sup>d</sup>	M+	5.38 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Grandparent</i>	2.24 <sup>b</sup>	L+	5.71 <sup>d</sup>	H-	5.54 <sup>d</sup>	H-	6.19 <sup>b</sup>	H+	3.54 <sup>b</sup>	M-	3.89 <sup>b</sup>	M	2.67 <sup>b</sup>	L+	2.56 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Doctor</i>	3.84 <sup>c</sup>	M-	5.06 <sup>c</sup>	M+	2.67 <sup>b</sup>	L+	4.30 <sup>a</sup>	M+	2.75 <sup>a</sup>	L+	2.81 <sup>a</sup>	M-	4.27 <sup>d</sup>	M+	5.54 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Parent</i>	2.00 <sup>b</sup>	L+	6.43 <sup>f</sup>	H+	6.38 <sup>e</sup>	H+	6.59 <sup>b</sup>	H+	3.03 <sup>a</sup>	L+	4.75 <sup>c</sup>	M+	2.00 <sup>a</sup>	L-	3.13 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Professor</i>	3.63 <sup>c</sup>	M-	5.06 <sup>c</sup>	M+	2.37 <sup>b</sup>	L+	4.49 <sup>a</sup>	M+	2.44 <sup>a</sup>	L+	3.06 <sup>a</sup>	M-	4.68 <sup>d</sup>	M+	5.84 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Service People</i>	3.63 <sup>c</sup>	M-	3.30 <sup>a</sup>	M-	1.35 <sup>a</sup>	L-	4.10 <sup>a</sup>	M+	4.78 <sup>c</sup>	M+	2.86 <sup>a</sup>	M-	5.25 <sup>e</sup>	H-	5.15 <sup>b</sup>	H-
	<i>Siblings</i>	1.83 <sup>b</sup>	L+	6.13 <sup>e</sup>	H	6.27 <sup>e</sup>	H+	6.38 <sup>b</sup>	H+	4.95 <sup>c</sup>	M+	5.03 <sup>c</sup>	M+	1.87 <sup>a</sup>	L-	2.32 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Significant Other</i>	1.63 <sup>b</sup>	L+	6.62 <sup>f</sup>	H+	6.67 <sup>e</sup>	H+	6.76 <sup>b</sup>	H+	4.52 <sup>c</sup>	M+	5.67 <sup>d</sup>	H-	1.84 <sup>a</sup>	L-	2.67 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Very Close Friend</i>	1.30 <sup>a</sup>	L-	6.50 <sup>f</sup>	H+	6.52 <sup>e</sup>	H+	6.71 <sup>b</sup>	H+	4.40 <sup>c</sup>	M+	6.16 <sup>e</sup>	H+	1.73 <sup>a</sup>	L-	2.67 <sup>a</sup>	L+
	<i>Young Child</i>	2.75 <sup>c</sup>	M-	4.00 <sup>b</sup>	M	3.86 <sup>c</sup>	M-	5.03 <sup>a</sup>	M+	5.81 <sup>d</sup>	H-	3.44 <sup>a</sup>	M-	3.56 <sup>c</sup>	M-	2.59 <sup>a</sup>	L+
		$F(12,720)=$ 35.10, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.37$		$F(12,720)=$ 42.77, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.42$		$F(12,732)=$ 150.08, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.71$		$F(12,732)=$ 66.77, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.52$		$F(12,720)=$ 53.02, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.47$		$F(12,708)=$ 49.19, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.46$		$F(12,720)=$ 46.78, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.44$		$F(12,708)=$ 57.43, $p<.001$ , $\eta^2=.49$	

Note: Down each column, means with similar superscripted letters have statistically similar means. L (+/-), M (+/-), and H (+/-) indicate the relative level for each of the relational types within each of the relational qualities (L = low; M = middle; H = high).

six cluster solution yielded the following clusters: (i) the relational types of professors, bosses, medical doctors, and counselors; (ii) the relational type of coworkers; (iii) the relational types of grandparents and parents; (iv) the relational types of significant others, very close friends, and siblings; (v) the relational type of service people; and (vi) the relational types of acquaintances and young children. The four cluster solution combined the first and second clusters, and the third and fourth clusters. Certain relational types group (i.e., cohere) together to form clusters regarding their similarities across the eight relational qualities overall, while other relational types remain distinct.

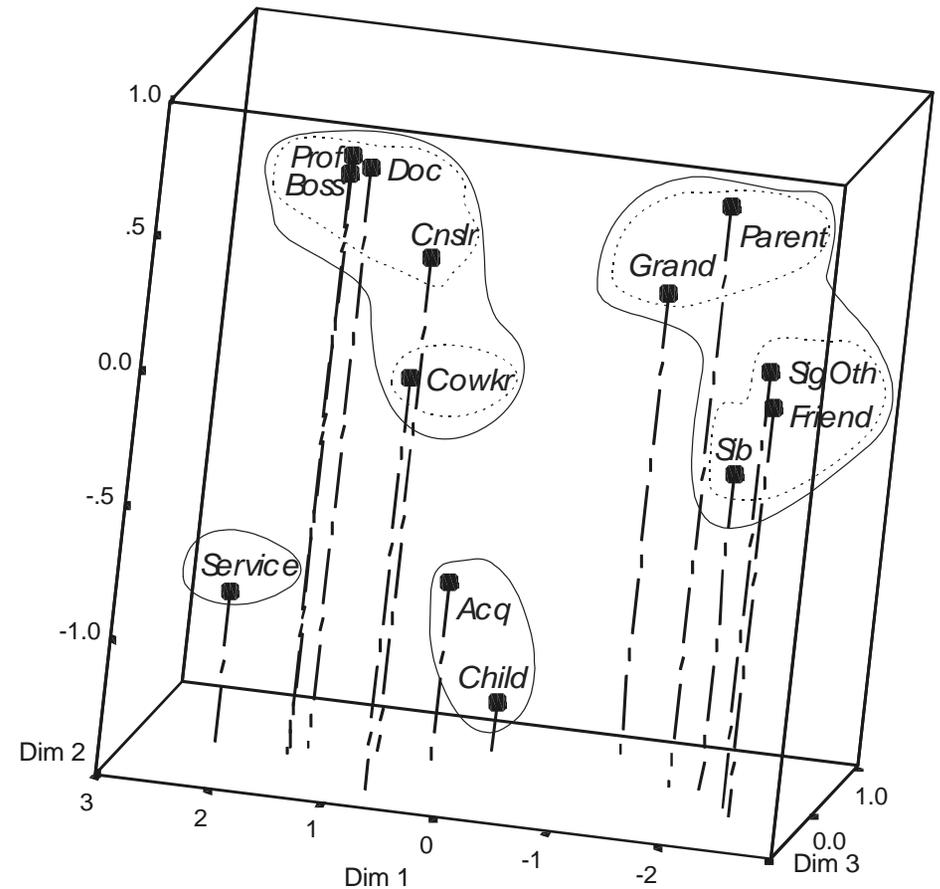
*Relational Type Variance in a Multi-Dimensional Space*

To examine the ways in which the clusters differed from and were similar to each other we conducted multidimensional scaling (MDS). Figure 1 diagrams the results of the multidimensional scaling procedure and superimposes the six and four cluster solutions. A three dimensional solution for the MDS best fit the data (stress = 0.0052;  $r^2 = .9998$ ). Two of the dimensions seemed to minimally differ in relational bond (i.e., closeness) and relational position (i.e., relative power). To make better sense of the three dimensions, however, factor analyses were performed to examine how the eight relational quality assessments of relational types grouped together and differed from each other uniquely. Because of the repeated measure nature of survey construction, we conducted thirteen separate analyses—one for each relational type. The factor analyses consistently revealed two or three factors, one of which concentrated on relational bond (consisting of emotional closeness, similarity, liking, lack of awkwardness, lack of superficiality, and benefit), another on relational position (consisting of relative power), and occasionally one factor loaded on relational function (consisting of task-orientation).

Knowing these preliminary results, we separately regressed relational bond (a new

Figure 1.

*Three-Dimensional Representation of Relational Type Similarity.*



*Note:* Dim 1 is the relational bond dimension (with negative numbers indicating higher relational bond; see Table 2), dim 2 is relational position (with negative numbers representing higher relational position for participants; see Table 2), and dim 3 is unspecified by the current data (see Table 2). Relational types grouped with solid lines represent the four cluster solution, whereas those grouped with dotted lines represent the bifurcation of the two clusters in the four cluster solution that split for the six cluster solution.

variable, determined by the factor analyses and composed of the following variables: emotional closeness, similarity, liking, awkwardness [reverse coded], superficiality [reverse coded], and benefit), relational position (using only the relative power variable, also determined by the factor analyses), and relational function (using only the task-orientation variable, determined by the factor analyses) onto the three coordinates of the three-dimensional MDS solution to determine how they, if at all, related to the MDS derived dimensions. This method helped interpret the MDS dimensions, based on the logic that if a particular relational dimension (e.g., relational position) can account for the variance of the relational types (in the MDS three-dimensional space), then that relational dimension should be correlated with (i.e., have a high standardized beta weight for) the coordinates of one dimension of the MDS space relative to the other two MDS dimensions, the other two dimensions for which should have small or non-significant correlations. Table 2 contains the results of the three regression analyses, which confirmed that dimension one was highly related to relational bond (i.e., standardized beta = -.99) and dimension two was highly related to relational position (i.e., standardized beta = -.92). While dimensions two and three also related to relational bond, just as dimensions one and three related to relational position, these relationships were either non-significant or weak (i.e., standardized beta < +/- .35). Therefore, dimension one was highly defined by relational bond, whereas dimension two was highly defined by relational position. Dimension three, on the other hand, was not well defined, as it did not correlate strongly with relational bond, position, or function. Relational types low on dimension three were coworkers, very close friends, significant others, and bosses, whereas relational types high on dimension three were grandparents, parents, and young children.

Although dimension three remains unclear, relational bond and position are critical

Table 2.

Results of Regression of Relational Bond, Position, and Function on Coordinates of the Three-Dimensional MDS Solution

	<u>Dependent Variables</u>					
	<i>Relational Bond</i>		<i>Relational Position</i>		<i>Relational Function</i>	
	Beta	Standardized Beta	Beta	Standardized Beta	Beta	Standardized Beta
<u>Independent Variables</u>						
Dimension 1	-.70***	-.99	-.22**	-.35	.74***	.83
Dimension 2	.20***	.12	-1.44***	-.92	.84***	.38
Dimension 3	-.20	-.06	-.54	-.17	-1.11***	-.25
	<i>F</i> (3,9) = 1171.52***, <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .99		<i>F</i> (3,9) = 50.85***, <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .94		<i>F</i> (3,9) = 193.79***, <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .99	

Note: \*\* *p* < .01; \*\*\* *p* < .001.

qualities accounting for variance among the relational types (see Figure 1). The relational types of grandparents, parents, significant others, very close friends, and siblings are high on relational bond (dimension one), whereas relationships with professors, bosses, counselors, coworkers, and service people are low on relational bond, and relationships with acquaintances and young children are near the midpoint of the relational bond dimension. On the low end of relational position (dimension two) are service people, acquaintances, and young children, whereas professors, bosses, doctors, parents, counselors, and grandparents are on the high end of relational position, and significant others, very close friends, coworkers, and siblings are near the midpoint of the dimension. Certain relational types are similar across the eight relational qualities considered simultaneously while others are different. All of the similarities and differences across the 13 relational types, however, are reducible to three dimensions, two of which are relational bond and relational position while the third dimension remains unclear.

#### Discussion

Relational types differ along relational qualities. The current research demonstrated that while some relational types were perceived to be similar along certain relational dimensions, the same relational types were different along other dimensions. Further, across the relational qualities the relational types cohered to form clusters based on their similarities and differences in the relational qualities overall. Interestingly, though, three dimensions accounted for similarities and differences among the relational types. Two of the dimensions were relational bond and relational position, whereas the third remained undefined. The current data replicated and extended to an application of relational types the work of Dillard, Solomon, and colleagues (Dillard et al., 1996, 1999; Solomon et al., 2002). The current research found support for their conceptualization of relational communication by demonstrating that two major dimensions

accounted for the variation in individuals' relational perceptions—affiliation (e.g., liking, closeness, bond, etc.) and dominance (e.g., power, position, status, etc.). The current research, however, tested this conceptualization via different methodologies and importantly extended their work by applying the conceptualization to relational types. Thus, these two dimensions seem integral not only to relationships and relational communication, but also to relational types.

Importantly, however, the current research revealed a third dimension accounting for variance among the relational types. Those relational types high on the third dimension were young children, grandparents, parents, and siblings, whereas those low on the dimension were coworkers, very close friends, and significant others. Those in the mid-range of the dimension were service persons, professors, and doctors. This third dimension, however, was undefined by the current data. The factor analyses suggested that relational function (i.e., task orientation) may have defined this third dimension, but the regression analyses added no confirmatory evidence. Perhaps the third dimension is related to relational permanency, with those relational types high on the dimension representing permanent (i.e., static) relationships and those low on the dimension representing easily terminated relationships. This explanation could account for why family relational types (e.g., those that are typically hard to disengage such as parents and siblings) are high on the third dimension. This explanation, however, does not account for why the relational type of young children (which arguably represents an easily terminated relationship) would be high on this dimension, unless of course individuals perceive this relational type as permanent relative to others. While the current findings support and extend the results of Dillard et al. (1999) that differences and similarities of relationships can be accounted for via relational bond and position, a third undefined dimension emerges.

The current research also adds to the utility of relational types as a meaningful and valid

way of describing individuals' relationships with others. In other words, the current research supports other research (e.g., Knapp et al., 1980; Wish et al., 1976) that finds, despite the within variance and blended nature of relational types, individuals have a sense of how these types differ in terms of relational qualities. The relational types, in other words, vary in ways similar to unique relationships. Thus, while clearly there are instances when individuals' relationships do not match the typicality of a relational type, they do vary in comparable ways. Relational types, therefore, provide a means to examine relationships in general or on average. Further, relational types that cohere together based on the relational qualities overall (e.g., grandparents and parents) may exhibit communicative similarities relative to those that are different overall (e.g., service people and medical doctors) which may exhibit communicative differences. For example, individuals may engage in similar levels of self-disclosure with those relational types from the same cluster (e.g., significant others and very close friends) compared to those from different clusters (e.g., significant others and professors) because of their shared levels of relational qualities (e.g., bond). Differences and similarities among relational types regarding the relational qualities should allow for an explanation and prediction of relational type-based communicative differences and similarities (e.g., Kellermann & Palomares, 2003). Relational types are important devices for how individuals represent, organize, and engage in relationships with others.

The current research is limited, however, in terms of the sample. College student participants were used and most likely influenced results relative to other types of samples (e.g., older, non-student, adults). For example, with an older, non-student sample results may differ in terms of relational position, such that certain relational types may change regarding their specific levels for that relational quality. Given previous research (e.g., Dillard et al., 1999), however, it is unlikely that the two major dimensions (i.e., relational bond and position) that accounted for

much variance in the current sample's perceptions of relational types would change with a different sample. In other words, if Dillard et al.'s conceptualization is correct, then the location on which different relationships and relational types land may vary by sample but the dimensions should not change. Future research should address the current sample limitation.

The current research demonstrates that two defined relational qualities (i.e., affiliation/bond and dominance/position) account for similarities and difference in relational types. This research, however, suggests a potential third undefined dimension for relational types. Nonetheless, there seems to be a finite set of dimensions upon which relationships and relational types vary. This conceptualization suggests that multiple relational qualities (in addition to bond and position, and perhaps a third dimension) may be unnecessary for defining relational communication, relationships, and corresponding relational types.

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