2016

Relational Effects of Person-Centered Comfort

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RELATIONAL EFFECTS OF PERSON-CENTERED COMFORT

A Dissertation

Submitted to Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by
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B.S., Chapman University, 2005
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2012
August 2016

My dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Patricia and David Koepke; my husband, Zachary Vickery; and Lena Marie Bethell, my best friend.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I study supportive communication and relationships because of how integral my support network is to my success and well-being. This support network has been so important throughout the entire dissertation process. First, I would like to acknowledge my advisor, friend, and mentor, Dr. Graham Bodie. This dissertation has been shaped one conversation at a time, where he gave important feedback and guidance. These conversations began in 2010 when I entered the program, and I hope they will continue now that the dissertation is completed. Thank you, Graham, for your time, dedication, and support. I would also like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Loretta Pecchioni and Dr. James Garand. Loretta's mentorship has positively influenced my scholarship and pedagogy. Jim has helped me to have a strong methodological background and I am continually inspired by his joy and enthusiasm. Additionally, I would like to thank the academic community at LSU for their support and encouragement. The professors and staff in Communication Studies, along with professors like Dr. Troy Blanchard and Dr. Jill Brody, helped me to think through the early ideas which inspired my dissertation. Special thanks to Kaitlin Cannava, Laura Hatcher, Sanela Osmanovic, and Liz Sills for their academic sisterhood and friendship.

My dissertation has been dedicated to my parents, husband, and best friend, but I also want to acknowledge their role in the dissertation process. My parents have encouraged me to succeed in everything I do; completing the dissertation has been no different. Mom and Dad, I love you both. Zachary, my husband, has been there for me every step of the way. Thank you for loving me every day, Zach. Lena Marie has made sure I take time away from LSU and enjoy everything Louisiana has to offer. Thank you Lena – ich liebe dich. While they cannot read, I would also like to acknowledge Sugar Magnolia the dog and Marvin the bunny. They have made me laugh when I have needed it and they ensure I don't take myself too seriously.

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ABSTRACT

When faced with stressful events, people seek the comfort of close others. The quality of support we receive from our friends, family members, and romantic partners, in turn, impacts our ability to cope. In addition, how we feel about our close relational partners seems intimately related to their abilities to foster appropriate, rather than maladaptive, coping. Surprisingly, however, the relational effects of support are largely ignored in literature. The two studies that comprise this dissertation incorporate tenets of two influential interpersonal communication theories, Person Centered Theory (PCT) and Relational Framing Theory (RFT), to investigate the relational effects of person-centered comfort. In Study 1, participants were asked to imagine experiencing an academic stressor, read a scripted supportive conversation, and were asked to evaluate the relational effects of the conversation. The results from Study 1 demonstrate that relational effects vary as a function of the person-centered quality of comforting messages such that high person-centered comfort is evaluated as expressing more affiliation and less dominance compared to low person-centered comfort. Further, HPC comfort results in positive changes in the perceived relationship qualities of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, satisfaction and trust compared to LPC comfort. In Study 2, participants were asked to engage in a supportive conversation with a friend, after which they evaluated each conversational turn. Turns were coded for person-centered comfort. The results of Study 2 reveal that (a) HPC comfort has a negative impact on turn-level ratings of dominance and (b) stressor severity impacts both relational frames of affiliation and dominance. These results contribute to PCT by identifying relational effects of relational meaning and relational outcomes which vary as a function of the quality of person-centered comfort and further contribute to PCT by recognizing the 'person' receiving person-centered comfort perceives relational effects in addition to feeling better (or worse) after a conversation. Further, these results contribute to RFT by recognizing

that the quality of person-centered comfort impacts frame relevancy, such that LPC comfort is perceived as more dominant and HPC comfort more affiliative. After acknowledging limitations, future directions are discussed for the programmatic study of supportive communication and relationships.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

I have a confession to make: I watch *Grey's Anatomy*. And by "watch" I mean that I have seen every episode over all twelve seasons (269 episodes to be precise). So maybe the confession is that I am an addict to bad television shows. *Grey's Anatomy* premiered in 2005 when I was finishing my last semester as an undergraduate. In November of 2006, I used my first bonus check to buy a DVR because I was sick of trying to program a VCR to record episodes. I let myself relax and escape from work when I watch. Sometimes I fold laundry and dust the house; other times I pour myself a glass of wine or treat myself to take-out. The only time I really talk about watching is when I inevitably find out my students also are watching, and then we spend time chatting about recent episodes or talking about what season they are in on Netflix (so I can avoid spoilers). After twelve seasons of watching, it is time for me to confess that *Grey's Anatomy* may not be the best written or best acted show on television, but it is *my* show.

While this may not be a confession for some people, it seems worthy of confession status for me. Personally, I would rather tell people about how I watch *The Wire* or *Mad Men* than admit that I watch *Grey's Anatomy*. It is a show with over-the-top medical and relational story lines. It is more like a soap opera at times than a drama. There are random sex scenes because everyone seems to sleep with everyone else, and many of the story lines are highly improbable. I watch nonetheless. I watch *Grey's Anatomy* as an escape, but I find it impossible to fully switch "off" while I watch. For instance, in the spring semester of 2013, I was writing a seminar paper about the discourse marker *just* in Dr. Jill Body's discourse analysis seminar. I found myself coding all uses of the word *just* in the dialogue. This past year, I would identify the *form* and *intent* of various lines of dialogue because our development of the Supportive Communication

Assessment Rubric classifies the meaning of utterances into form and intent (Vickery et al., 2015, November-b). With my particular interest in relationships, I have always been fascinated by the female friendship between Dr. Christina Yang (played by Sandra Oh) and Dr. Meredith Grey (played by Ellen Pompeo). Yang and Grey refer to each other as "my person," a phrase used to represent their close and intimate friendship (McKee, 2005). These characters have been there for each other since the first season; through their scripted dialogue they have shared surgeries and secrets; they have fought; they have cried together at the loss of friends, family, patients, and romantic relationships; they have complained about coworkers and family members; and they have laughed and danced together in living rooms and at weddings. Yang and Grey may be fictional on-screen characters, but their story arc and friendship represent those looming off-screen scholarly questions from which I cannot escape including, "How does communication help us to build relationships?" and "How can what we say to others effect our relationships?"

Communication matters for understanding our relationships. The connection between communication and relationships is represented in a central assumption of interpersonal communication that communication involves both content and relational meaning (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). *Content meaning* conveys or expresses information of a message, while *relational* meaning captures "what sort of a message it is to be taken as, and therefore, ultimately to the *relationship* between the communicants" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 52, emphasis in original). Our conversations are composed of turns and utterances which contain messages, and what we hear our relational partners say in these conversations ultimately influences what we think and feel about our relationships. Goldsmith and Baxter (1996)

represented this view in their recognition that our relationships are constituted in talk, and the topics of talk we create and sustain with relational partners have meaning for our relationships.

Witnessed both on-screen and off-screen, relational partners converse about an impressive breadth of topics, including getting acquainted, complaining, catching up, reminiscing, conflict, and talking about problems (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996). Of the various conversational topics relational partners enact, talking about problems is a distinctive type of conversation which captures sharing everyday hassles, problems, emotions, and experiences (Jefferson, 1980). Research by Bernard Rimé (2009) and Shelly Gable and colleagues (Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006; Gable, Gosnell, Maisel, & Strachman, 2012; Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004) suggests sharing positive and negative emotions is a common occurrence in our close relationships. When things go right and when things go wrong, we tell our friends, family, and romantic partners.

How our friends, family, and romantic partners acknowledge and respond to our good (and bad) news, whether that acknowledgement is explicit or implicit and positive or negative, represents a class of behavior known as supportive communication, "verbal and nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011, p. 317). Supportive conversations share general associations with reported relational satisfaction in marital partners (Sprecher, Metts, Burleson, Hatfield, & Thompson, 1995), friends (Samter, 1994), and family members (Caughlin, 2003). The general association between supportive communication and relational satisfaction is important because it is a foundation for understanding and investigating how communication affects relationships. Indeed, relational satisfaction is a key ingredient to many theories of close

relationships and much practical advice on how to make relationships last a lifetime (Caughlin, 2002; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b).

Supportive communication is associated with relational satisfaction, but relational satisfaction is only one aspect of relationship quality. Drawing from *Grey's Anatomy*, although "my person" is never defined, dialogue from Yang provides some insight into the quality of this close relationship: "If I murdered someone, she's the person I'd call to help me drag the corpse across the living room floor . . . she's my person" (Rimes & Corn, 2007). Unintentionally (and humorous considering the focus of my dissertation), assisting with the problem of a corpse is a form of physical assistance, classified as instrumental support (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). More importantly, this line of dialogue represents "my person" as someone with whom one shares a *close*, *intimate*, and *committed* relationship; one in which serious problems are shared. *Closeness* recognizes the "degree of affective, cognitive, and behavioral mutual dependence between two people" (Dibble, Levine, & Park, 2011, p. 565). *Intimacy* "involves feeling understood, validated, cared for, and closely connected with another person" (Reis & Shaver, 1988, p. 385). *Commitment* is "the tendency to maintain a relationship and feel psychologically dependent (in the sense of connected) on it" (Reis & Collins, 2000, p. 151). Supportive communication shares more than general associations with relational quality; supportive communication affects relationships and their felt satisfaction, closeness, intimacy, and commitment.

When supportive communication has been found to affect relationships, it is primarily attributed to the *content* of support. When classifying supportive message content, scholars typically discuss emotional, social network, esteem, tangible, and informational support (Cobb, 1976; Schaefer et al., 1981). Each form of support can be defined further; for instance,

emotional support includes "specific lines of communicative behavior enacted by one party with the intent of helping another *cope effectively* with emotional distress" (Burleson, 2003, p. 552, emphasis added). Not surprisingly, the content of emotional support effects individual well-being, with research finding that higher quality emotional support produces emotional improvement (Jones, 2004). But like all messages, supportive communication also expresses relational meaning. Emotional support may have particular relational meaning because "emotional support includes intimacy and attachment, reassurance, and being able to confide in or rely on another – all of which contribute to the feeling that one is loved and cared about, or even that one is a member of the group, not a stranger" (Schaefer et al., 1981, p. 385). A recent study revealed higher quality emotional support increased relational satisfaction while poorer quality support decreased relational satisfaction (Afifi, Afifi, Merrill, Denes, & Davis, 2013). The Afifi et al. (2013) study starts to raise questions: Can emotional support influence other relationship qualities? Can the other forms of supportive content also affect relationships? How do interpretations of the relational meaning of support influence relational outcomes?

The questions raised about the effects of supportive communication on relationships are important because supportive communication does not always improve relationship qualities – support, like any communication, can also be detrimental to relationships. It is not enough to expect a relationship to be a place of support simply because it is a relationship; relational partners can provide ineffective, unhelpful, and even harmful support (Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Servaty-Seib & Burleson, 2007). If our relational partners offer poor, inappropriate, or ineffective support we may feel worse about our problem *and* our relationship, while appropriate and effective support may help us feel better *and* cause us to evaluate our relationship more positively. One explanation for how support affects relationships is in

perceived partner responsiveness, or perceptions that our relational partners understand, respect, and care for us (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Perceived partner responsiveness is associated with sharing information with partners and relational qualities like intimacy, trust, and satisfaction (Gable et al., 2012). Perceiving that a partner cares for us and understands our troubles is one part of having a supportive relationship, but perceptions do not directly capture what our relational partners *do* that makes us feel better about our problems. Brant Burleson (1990) recognized that it is not relationships that are supportive per se, but the "specific acts of informing, advising, empathizing, or giving of material aid that actually provide support" (p. 66). Thus, when studying relationships, the focus should not only be on perceptions of supportiveness, but on those messages that communicate and express support. It is these messages that impact evaluations; that is, whence do perceptions of responsiveness arise?

The purpose of this dissertation is not to serve as a personal avenue for emotional support (as in asking my committee to provide messages that help me feel okay about having the guilty viewing pleasure I confessed above) but to investigate how enacted emotional support impacts, changes, and influences our relationships (real ones, not those scripted on screen). If emotional support conveys intimacy through reassurance and inclusion, then this type of supportive act should not only relieve distress but also influence perceptions of relational satisfaction, closeness, commitment, and intimacy. Higher quality emotional support that recognizes the feelings and experiences of a relational partner may help partners feel more close and intimate, while lower quality emotional support, through which emotions are invalidated or denied, may result in reduced perceptions of intimacy and closeness.

The focus of this dissertation is on understanding the relation between enacted emotional support and relationship quality, specifically focusing on how enacted support influences our

relationships with others. My primary goal is to understand how the relational meaning imbued in quality emotional support is interpreted and influences the quality of close relationships including intimacy, trust, satisfaction, commitment, and closeness. This is a small piece of the larger puzzle of understanding how conversations influence relationships, but because of the ubiquity and importance of troubles talk and emotional support in relationships, it is an integral area of inquiry. In service of my goals, the remainder of this chapter explicates the theoretical and practical importance of investigating the relational effects of enacted emotional support and further introduces the theoretical framework of enacted support as person-centered (PC) emotional support.

Theoretical and Practical Importance

The primary theoretical contribution of this dissertation is to enhance understanding of how the quality of emotional support enacted in conversations produces changes in relational well-being. Relational well-being encompasses a variety of concepts researched in relational contexts; there is evidence for several distinct relational qualities including commitment, intimacy, satisfaction, trust, closeness, liking, and love (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). These relational qualities have primarily been examined in capitalization conversations, or those conversations focused on sharing a personal positive event (Gable et al., 2004). Prior findings provide evidence that relational qualities are affected by the perceived responsiveness to capitalization attempts (Gable et al., 2012; Reis et al., 2010); I will draw from these findings to identify how the distinct content and relational meaning of enacted emotional support should affect relational qualities based on the differences between emotional support and capitalization support, as well as differences in enacted support. My contribution to supportive communication research will create a framework

of relational effects observed in relationships which vary in type (e.g., friend, family, romantic partner) and general quality (e.g., weak social ties or strong social ties).

The second theoretical contribution is to extend the known effects of person-centered comfort in enacted support settings. Social support is a broad construct which includes *perceived support*, the individual subjective perceptions regarding whether support is available as needed from others (S. Cohen & Wills, 1985; Pierce, Sarason, & Sarason, 1991), and *received support*, or the frequency of particular types of support that have occurred in a social network over a specified timeframe (Barrera, 1986; Barrera, Sandler, & Ramsay, 1981). My dissertation is primarily situated in the *enacted support* perspective which captures "the things people say and do for each other" (Goldsmith, 2004, p. 3; also see Lakey, Orehek, Hain, & VanVleet, 2010). Enacted support is expressed and unfolds during conversation and produces a variety of effects including relational effects. Of the three perspectives, enacted support provides a way to connect the quality of supportive messages to relational meaning *and* outcomes of relational quality. In studying how supportive communication affects relational quality or well-being, there is a need to focus on supportive messages and how support recipients evaluate these messages for relational meaning. My dissertation focuses on a particular quality of enacted emotional support –person-centered comfort (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Burleson, 1984b, 1994b). The second theoretical contribution focuses on extending Person Centered Theory (PCT; Jones & Bodie, 2014) and research on verbal person-centeredness (Jones & Guerrero, 2001) by identifying the relational effects of enacted person-centered comfort.

The primary contributions of my dissertation are theoretical which stand to help integrate and connect supportive communication research with relationship research; however, my dissertation also has practical merit. My dissertation focuses on understanding how people

evaluate supportive messages provided by relational partners. The process of decoding and interpreting messages is something everyone does in a variety of relational and communicative contexts – not just in supportive contexts (Edwards, 2011). Understanding more about how people interpret the relational meaning of messages may improve our understanding as to why some relational partners are seen as better partners and better communicators. My parents had many great sayings which influenced my childhood and teenage years, but one that stands out was first shared with me when I discovered the joys of sarcasm: My parents would constantly say, "It's not just what you say, but how you say it," reminding me that others are affected by more than the content of your message. My dissertation findings may have practical significance for relational partners who wish to communicate in ways that display sensitivity and appropriateness for another's emotional experiences while also helping partners to understand how important and valued they are as a person.

Theoretical Framework: Evaluating Person-Centered Comfort

The theoretical contributions of my dissertation involve identifying the relational qualities which vary as a function of enacted emotional support. The content of emotional support varies, and one promising framework for understanding the relational effects of emotional support is Person Centered Theory (PCT; Jones & Bodie, 2014). Verbal person centeredness (VPC) is a theoretical property of comforting messages that "reflects an awareness of and adaptation to the subjective, affective, and *relational* aspects of communicative contexts" (Burleson, 1987, p. 305, emphasis added); the relational aspects of person-centered comfort is the focus of my dissertation. Person centered comforting messages are hierarchically ordered in terms of quality where low person-centered (LPC) comfort condemns, criticizes, or denies the feelings of a distressed person; moderate person-centered (MPC) comfort implicitly

acknowledges perspectives but offers only non-feeling centered explanations or messages intended to distract a distressed other from thinking about the problematic event; and high person-centered (HPC) comfort explicitly recognizes the feelings of others, encouraging distressed people to elaborate and identify feelings (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Burleson, 1984b). HPC messages are consistently rated as more sensitive, supportive, and helpful (High & Dillard, 2012), and are more likely to assist with coping (Jones, 2004).

PCT is a broad theoretical perspective, with work exploring how supportive messages are produced (Burleson, 1983, 1985) and the factors explaining the production of person-centered messages (Burleson, 1984a; Mortenson, Liu, Burleson, & Liu, 2006; Samter & Burleson, 1984). Other studies focus on how differential processing of these messages explain variability in evaluations (Bodie, Burleson, Holmstrom, et al., 2011; Burleson, 2008, 2009). I use PCT as a way to classify and organize the content of supportive messages offered in everyday supportive conversations, recognizing that differences in VPC comfort should express different relational meaning, and the quality of VPC comfort should produce changes in perceived relational quality.

A primary focus on the perception and evaluation of person-centered comfort in the conversational context will reveal how quality emotional support captured in the person-centered hierarchy directly impacts relational quality, versus treating relationships only as a context for supportive communication or a moderator between the effects of supportive communication and outcomes (Holmstrom et al., 2015). Spouses, family, friends, and acquaintances are sources of both helpful and unhelpful support (Dakof & Taylor, 1990). Standardized supportive messages from friends, versus classmates, are evaluated as more helpful and comforting (R. A. Clark et al., 1998). Treating relationships as automatic contexts for enacted support is akin to thinking "my person" is an automatic label given without communication and conversations to initiate,

develop, and maintain the relationship (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Television writers recognize that characters like Yang and Grey cannot be each other's person without expository dialogue. Indeed, our close, committed, and intimate relationships are developed through and, in turn, influenced by communication. Thus, we are left to wonder the role emotionally supportive messages play, for instance, in the development, maintenance, and dissolution of a variety of types of relationships. Are these messages only important for some of these stages? Are certain relational qualities like trust and satisfaction only relevant for certain types of relationships or in certain stages of relational development? Do supportive messages impact all stages within all types of relationships equally? If there are differences, are they in kind or degree?

While not all questions raised in this introduction will be answered, my dissertation establishes a program of research devoted to understanding how communication affects the quality of relationships, starting with the immediate effects of person-centered comfort on perceptions of intimacy, closeness, commitment, liking, loving, satisfaction, and trust, along with evaluations of relational meaning. These questions provide a way to extend PCT and advance some similar research questions acknowledged by Jones and Bodie (2014), including understanding how person-centered comfort occurs in conversations and the multidimensional nature of person-centered comfort.

The next chapter of this dissertation provides a detailed review of the theoretical framework explaining how enacted support impacts relational well-being by focusing on the constructs of enacted emotional support, VPC comforting quality, and relational quality; in it I also advance five theoretical postulates. The third chapter presents Study 1 where I test the relational effects of person-centered comfort as represented by two classes of effects. Then, the fourth chapter presents Study 2 where I focus on relational evaluations and the relational

meaning represented in the conversational turns which comprise supportive conversations between friends. Chapter 5 discusses the results of both studies in relation to the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 and concludes by discussing the ways in which the theoretical postulates will inform my programmatic study of supportive relationships.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical framework for investigating how the quality of emotional support influences relationships. First, I situate supportive communication as skilled communication, which can be perceived as more (or less) effective in meeting intended goals and improving relationships. Then, I introduce and advance five theoretical postulates which provide the framework necessary for organizing the extant literature and investigating the effects of person-centered comfort on relational outcomes. Within the rationale for each theoretical postulate, I identify and review relevant empirical findings. Through these theoretical postulates, I advance that person-centered comfort enacted in everyday supportive conversations embodies content and relational meaning and has important effects on the relationship between a support provider and support recipient.

Supportive Communication and Relationships

Through communication, people feel connected to others; the need for belonging motivates people to seek and maintain interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Interpersonal relationships serve important functions, including helping people avoid the detrimental effects of loneliness (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2009). People express affection in relationships through communicative actions, reinforcing bonds with relational partners (Floyd, 2006). Expressing affection is more than a functional goal benefitting a relational partner; receiving affection from loved ones improves physical health, reducing cholesterol and cortisol (Floyd, Mikkelson, Hesse, & Pauley, 2007; Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008). Although communication in relationships involves more than sharing affection (e.g., compliance gaining, conflict), studies show that affectively-oriented communication skills are particularly important for close relationships (Burleson & Samter, 1990, 1996; Burleson, Samter, & Lucchetti, 1992;

Samter, Whaley, Mortenson, & Burleson, 1997). The ability to communicate with others and let relational partners know how we feel about them is important in relationships.

Despite intentions to build intimate relationships or express affection in relationships, such communication is not always successful. People do not always convey sentiments and feelings accurately; relational partners are not always accurate in inferring our intentions and expressions. Communication involves skill; that is, people must be able to convey the appropriate message and meaning for a particular social and relational context. As communication is a social activity, successful communication is dependent "on the social interaction skills of the individual – and those of his or her associations and interlocutors" (Greene & Burleson, 2003, p. xiii). People exhibit varied levels of skill when attempting to meet myriad communicative goals including expressing affection (Morman & Floyd, 1998), arguing (Aloia & Solomon, 2015), persuading (Dillard & Marshall, 2003), and comforting others (Burleson, 2003). People also are variably skilled at interpreting communication. Message interpretation skill is important for relationships and helps determine whether affection (Floyd & Riforgiate, 2008), persuasion (Dillard, Shen, & Vail, 2007; Shen & Bigsby, 2013), and support (Lehman & Hemphill, 1990) are beneficial for a receiver. Skillful communication is important for communicating with our relational partners.

Skillful communication is particularly important for understanding one particular aspect of affection – how people effectively comfort others. Skillful support provision is associated with increased peer acceptance (Burleson et al., 1986; Samter & Burleson, 1990); those who can effectively offer support are more liked and included in social networks. More generally, the ability to successfully meet communicative goals is important for support and affection, but communication also matters for relationships. Successful relationships are "a skilled

accomplishment – an accomplishment wherein various social and communication abilities play vital roles in every phase of relationship development" (Burleson, 1995, p. 575). Affective communication skills matter, impacting the quality of our relationships and the ability to engage in supportive conversations as we pursue our affective needs in these relationships.

Supportive communication is a skill – people vary in their ability to effectively express and in turn discern expressions of comfort and affection. The theoretical framework charted in this chapter advances the central role of enacted emotional support in close and intimate relationships with others by focusing on the importance of everyday supportive conversations where affection and support are exchanged; the important individual and relational effects of everyday supportive conversations which vary as a function of the quality of support offered; and how skillful supportive communication creates and sustains important interpersonal relationships. I begin by introducing and explaining the first theoretical postulate.

Postulate 1: Emotional support is enacted in conversation

Conversations are collaborative joint actions that rely on the contributions of all interloctors to succeed and create meaning (H. H. Clark, 1996). The meaning of conversations is associated with the topics of talk enacted in the conversation (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996). For instance, conversations can help people "pass a good time" through gossiping, catching up, or discussing sports and current events in the community. Conversations also can help us to make decisions, persuade others, gain information, and make plans with others (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996). Communication is situated in conversation.

Conversations are important for relationships. Conversations contain self-disclosure, where people share information about themselves with others to build, develop, and maintain relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Ledbetter, 2008; Ledbetter, Mazer, et al., 2011).

Conversations also are used for defining and understanding romantic relationships (Knobloch, 2006; Knobloch & Theiss, 2011). While we can identify the distinct types of talk enacted in conversations, people rarely stop talking once a singular topic has been addressed, instead covering a variety of topics within a larger conversation. These everyday conversations can be short and brief or long and involved, and we converse with a variety of conversational partners including friends, family, colleagues, and strangers throughout the day (Duck, Rutt, Hoy Hurst, & Strejc, 1991). Everyday conversations occur within a variety of relational contexts and cover various topics.

Everyday conversation is important for well-being. In families, stepchildren who engage in everyday talk with stepparents are more satisfied with these relationships (Schrodt, Soliz, & Braithwaite, 2008). People who more frequently engage partners in active, substantive conversations are happier and report higher well-being (Mehl, Vazire, Holleran, & Clark, 2010). These active everyday conversations have important implications for relational well-being: Barnes and Duck (1994) recognized that everyday talk is how people communicate "to a person the knowledge that she or he is valued and cared for" (p. 191). By having everyday conversations, people express affection and show others they are valued and important.

Supportive communication is situated in everyday conversations. One recognizable type of talk is talking about everyday "troubles" known as problems and stressors (Jefferson, 1980, 1988), which provides a logical context for seeking and receiving support. Supportive communication, "verbal and nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (MacGeorge et al., 2011, p. 317), is offered in everyday conversations to help with stressors. Supportive communication in conversations takes various forms: For instance, people may offer problem-focused support like advice, or

recommendations of how to manage, think, or feel about a problem (MacGeorge, Feng, & Thompson, 2008). People may offer tangible assistance for problems, offering rides or monetary assistance; or people may respond with emotional support aimed at alleviating the distress and upset another is experiencing (House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988). People also may seek emotional assistance for positive events, sharing positive news and events in the hopes of capitalizing on (and benefitting from) the supportive responses of others in celebrating and acknowledging these positive events (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994; Reis et al., 2010); in these conversations, individuals may receive celebratory support which acknowledges these positive events (McCullough & Burleson, 2012), or emotional support which recognizes the feeling and emotions associated with positive events. Everyday conversations are where support occurs, after we catch up, before we make plans, and when we share good news and bad news.

Emotional support, as it occurs in everyday supportive conversations, is conceptualized as enacted support. Enacted support is "the things people say and do for each other" (Goldsmith, 2004, p. 3). As Postulate 1 recognizes, people receive support and feel supported in everyday conversations. That is to say, relational partners provide much-needed support for life-altering events like the death of a loved one or the diagnosis of a terminal disease – but relational partners also are there to alleviate hurt and upset for failed relationships, job interviews, and other everyday struggles and problems. Supportive communication, including emotional support, is enacted in talking about problems, sharing positive events, complaining, and breaking bad news (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996); when engaging in these goal-directed types of talk, we are able to seek and receive support that helps us feel better (or perhaps makes us feel worse) about whatever event precipitated the conversation.

There are many ways to enact emotional support. Emotional support in the optimal matching model includes expression of concern, understanding, sympathy, reassurance, confidentiality, physical affection, relational expressions, and prayer in the interaction (Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Cutrona & Suhr, 1994). Emotional support in interactive coping includes empathy, physical affection, compliments, attempts to lift the mood of a distressed other, reassurance, confidentiality, talk about feelings, availability of the support provider; all these behaviors are considered *solace* behaviors which approach the emotions of others (Barbee & Cunningham, 1995, 2000). Emotional support in Person Centered Theory prioritizes the content of emotional support messages offered to another person who is experiencing problems; person-centered emotional support focuses on the acknowledgement, explication, and elaboration of the feelings and emotions of a distressed other, offered with the intention to comfort a distressed other (Jones & Bodie, 2014). Emotional support encompasses a variety of verbal and nonverbal actions intended to express affect, concern, and caring.

If the emotional support enacted in conversations is effective, we feel better, are encouraged to cope effectively with our problems, and feel more connected to our relational partners through these everyday conversations. Emotional support effectiveness varies based on how emotional support is conceptualized in the conversational process. Within the matching model, effective support would be classified as those responses which "match" the type of support sought by the conversational partner (Cutrona & Russell, 1990); matching support occurs when support providers seek informational support and receive informational support from support providers, or if support providers disclose emotions and receive emotional support from support providers. Mismatching support is associated with perceptions of partner insensitivity (Cutrona, Shaffer, Wesner, & Gardner, 2007). The interactive coping model

recognizes effectiveness of solace behaviors in contrast to *escape* behaviors which avoid emotions through distraction, verbal and nonverbal avoidance, showing irritation, and being mean (Barbee & Cunningham, 1995). Effectiveness in Person Centered Theory is focused on the *quality* of emotionally supportive messages and responses as these messages are functionally better at reducing distress and upset (Burleson, 2003). Higher quality messages are more person-centered, explicitly naming the feelings and emotions of others (Burleson, 1994b); effective person-centered support improves mood, alleviates upset, and enhances coping by naming feelings and emotions while offering new perspectives and feeling-centered explanations for distress (High & Dillard, 2012). Person-centered comfort is situated in everyday supportive conversations, and the effectiveness of person-centered enacted support focuses on how a distressed other feels after the conversation. Effective person-centered comfort improves mood, coping, and satisfaction following conversation. Furthermore, the ability to produce person-centered support is recognized as a *skill*; that is, people vary in their ability to recognize and elaborate upon the feelings of others (Burleson, 2003).

The first theoretical postulate raises many intriguing questions. One such question relates to the progression of everyday supportive conversations: What other topics do people talk about when sharing problems? What are the similarities between the structure and outcomes of various everyday supportive conversations? How does person-centered enacted support respond to positive news? Are there some everyday supportive conversations that are particularly important for relationships, leading to increased relational satisfaction and closer relationships? These and similar questions have been offered to assist our understanding of how person-centered comfort unfolds within supportive conversations (Jones & Bodie, 2014). This theoretical postulate

defines the context in which enacted emotional support occurs – in conversations as contributions which sustain conversations and impact relationships.

Postulate 2: Enacted emotional support has individual and relational effects

The second theoretical postulate recognizes that *communication has effects*; that is, what people say matters. This is not just a theoretical postulate of enacted support; for instance, persuasive communication messages also have known effects on the recipients of these messages (Bodie, 2013b; Bodie, Burleson, & Jones, 2012; Dillard et al., 2007; Goldsmith, 2004; O'Keefe, 1994). Within the communication perspective of support, messages effect how people feel about themselves and their relationships. This second postulate recognizes and incorporates the theoretical assumption "of a relative *direct connection between communication and well-being*" (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002, p. 385, emphasis in original).

Central to this postulate is that enacted emotional support does not produce a singular effect. Rather, the effects of enacted emotional support include instrumental, identity, and relational effects (Burleson, 1994a). Identity effects capture one class of effects known as message evaluations (Bodie, 2013b). Evaluations of support are multidimensional: Supportive messages are evaluated as effective (or ineffective), appropriate (or inappropriate), helpful (or unhelpful), sensitive (or insensitive), and supportive (or unsupportive). Because supportive evaluations are distinct processes, emotional support can be evaluated as helpful (but not sensitive) or effective (but not supportive) (Goldsmith & Dun, 1997; Goldsmith, McDermott, & Alexander, 2000). Message evaluations are important to individual well-being; changes in affect, behavior, and cognition are classified as instrumental effects, a type of message outcome (Bodie, 2013b).

Enacted emotional support affects individual well-being and coping. Individual well-being encompasses physical outcomes affecting cardiovascular systems and stress reactivity, as well as cognitive and affective outcomes, such as re-appraising problems, improved mood or attitude, and improved coping efficacy. Emotional support is associated with improved cardiovascular health (Uchino, 2004; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). Greater rates of stress recovery, measured by salivary cortisol, are observed in dating partners who prefer emotional support and receive adequate support in conversation (Priem & Solomon, 2015). Enacted emotional support, versus enacted problem support, is associated with improved conversational satisfaction (Cutrona & Suhr, 1992). Emotional support is associated with greater caregiving quality and improved mood (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Within the relationship between emotional support and improved well-being, communication is important – before people can experience improved well-being, people perceive and evaluate the quality of support offered (Bodie et al., 2012; Collins & Feeney, 2000; Goldsmith, 2004; High & Solomon, 2016).

The quality of person-centered emotional support is particularly important in improving individual well-being. Highly person-centered (HPC) comfort is associated with improved cardiovascular functioning (Bodie, 2012). HPC comfort produces a greater degree of emotional improvement following conversations than low person-centered (LPC) or moderately person-centered (MPC) comfort (Jones, 2004; Jones & Burleson, 2003). Evaluations of person-centered message quality, including evaluations of sensitivity, supportiveness, helpfulness, and effectiveness, mediate the message-affect improvement relationship (Bodie et al., 2012).

Much of the evidence for this theoretical postulate is focused on effects of enacted emotional support on *individual well-being*; however, this theoretical postulate also recognizes that enacted emotional support influences *relational well-being.* Relational well-being captures

evaluations of relationship quality following enacted emotional support. Relational quality includes different dimensions such as intimacy, closeness, commitment, and satisfaction with a particular relationship (Fletcher et al., 2000; Gable et al., 2004; Reis et al., 2010). Problem- and emotion-focused support skills are associated with marital satisfaction (Sullivan, Pasch, Johnson, & Bradbury, 2010); likewise, relationship well-being (including relational satisfaction) is predicted by partner responsiveness in conversation (Gable et al., 2006). There is evidence that "good" support (operationalized as HPC comfort) increases relational satisfaction with friends following conversation, while "bad" support (operationalized as LPC comfort) decreases relational satisfaction (Afifi et al., 2013).

Drawing from the theoretical logic evidenced in the multidimensional nature of individual effects, enacted emotional support should affect relational quality in similar ways. First, the multidimensional nature of relational effects should be featured in *evaluations* of these messages. Support is complex; supportive messages and support providers are evaluated on various dimensions including helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2000). The quality of support influences evaluations; HPC support is evaluated as more helpful and sensitive than MPC support and LPC support (Bodie et al., 2012, Studies 2 & 3; Burleson, 2008; Burleson & Mortenson, 2003; Samter, Burleson, & Basden-Murphy, 1987, Study 1). If enacted emotional support is evaluated along various dimensions and the quality of support influences these evaluations, then enacted emotional support may produce various relational evaluations. Second, enacted emotional support should affect various aspects of relational quality. Relational quality represents relational satisfaction in addition to other constructs including intimacy, commitment, loving, and trust (Fletcher et al., 2000; Rusbult et al., 1998). The importance of the second theoretical postulate is not in raising or addressing particular

questions as many of these questions have been explored in other studies; the primary purpose of this theoretical postulate is in explaining the various effects which occur following enacted emotional support. The second theoretical postulate introduces and provides the theoretical logic on which the following postulates are based. This theoretical logic recognizes that enacted support has theoretical and empirical evidence for multidimensional effects, and that enacted person-centered comfort produces various effects including relational effects.

Postulate 3: Enacted emotional support embodies content and relational meaning

A central assumption in communication is that communication incorporates two types of meaning, content and relational meaning (Watzlawick et al., 1967). The content of communication is "anything that is communicable" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 51). The person-centered hierarchy of comforting communication classifies emotional support into levels based on differences in the *content* of these emotionally supportive messages (Burleson, 1984b). The content of HPC comfort, for instance, includes recognition of the problems and emotions experienced by a distressed relational partner.

Relational meaning is distinct from content meaning. Relational meaning expresses how messages should be interpreted; it captures "what sort of a message it is to be taken as, and therefore, ultimately, to the *relationship* between the communicants" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 52, emphasis in original). Relational meaning is particularly important for interpreting and evaluating communication. Millar and Rogers (1976) recognized "the communication process is largely a negotiation process whereby persons reciprocally define their relationships and themselves" (p. 88). Recognized dimensions of relational meaning include: *involvement* (e.g., a partner's receptivity and inclusion towards their conversational partner), *similarity* (e.g., qualities and characteristics shared between conversational partners), *dominance* (e.g., a partner's desire

to control an interaction), and *affiliation* (e.g., a partner's positive affect and liking toward a partner), among others (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Dillard, Solomon, & Palmer, 1999). Relational Framing Theory organizes these dimensions into mental structures called relational frames, which represent affiliation, dominance, and intensity (Dillard, Solomon, & Samp, 1996). Following this axiom, if all communication contains both content and relational meaning, then supportive communication embodies both content and relational meaning.

People interpret the content and relational meaning of messages. The evaluations of supportive messages as helpful, sensitive, and supportive provide initial evidence for relational meaning: Evaluations of the supportiveness of communication represent loyalty, agreement, and assurance; and sensitivity reflects positive feelings for others, gentleness, and considerateness (Goldsmith et al., 2000). Additionally, supportive communication should also capture relational meanings that represent the relationship between partners as one based on dominance, similarity, affection, or involvement (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Dillard et al., 1999). There are various relational meanings inferred with the content of supportive communication. Following this logic, then, judgments and interpretations of relational meaning are a form of message *evaluation*, one class of supportive message effects (Bodie, 2013b).

Variations in the person-centered quality of enacted emotional support should be associated with differing evaluations of relational meaning. The content of LPC comfort condemns, challenges, and ignores the feelings of a distressed relational partner (Burleson, 1984b). By condemning or denying the emotions and feelings of a distressed relational partner, LPC comfort may be evaluated as a form of dominance or control attempting to influence the distressed relational partner on what can be disclosed, shared, or discussed in the relationship. Relational control is "the need to establish a comfortable degree of influence that one exercises

over the behavior of others" (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, p. 195). LPC comfort may invoke relational meanings suggesting the support provider has dominance or control over the expression of emotions in feelings. LPC comfort may be inferred to carry a relational meaning suggesting the relational partner should not express emotions. In other words, LPC comfort may send a relational meaning of, "I don't want us to talk about this," signaling to the distressed relational partner that the current relationship is not one where feelings and emotions should be explored. Focusing on the provider's ability to produce quality emotional support, Burleson (1994a) concluded "the use of unsophisticated comforting strategies is associated with relational difficulties" (p. 154). If a message producer is experiencing relational difficulty, then the distressed relational partner is likely to comprehend this relational difficulty in LPC comfort. When distressed relational partners evaluate LPC comfort, the relational meaning conveyed with the LPC content should reflect aspects of control (e.g., "you know better than I do how I should feel"), decreased receptivity (e.g., "You're not interested in why I might feel this way, or have already found a way to attribute my emotions to some aspect of the situation"), and suppressed emotional expression, (e.g., "You are telling me to stop feeling upset so I don't express these feelings in your presence").

The relational meaning of MPC comfort should differ from LPC comfort because these messages implicitly acknowledge feelings and experiences. MPC comfort offers distractions from upset feelings which may convey relational meaning of liking and a desire for sociability with the distressed relational partner. Sociability includes participating in activities "such as inviting friends to one's home, that connote affection" (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, p. 209), suggesting a desire to be around the distressed relational partner, regardless of their current emotional state. Simple statements of sympathy represent general affective responses (e.g., "I'm

sorry,"), expressing positive affect or emotion towards the distressed partner. When distressed relational partners evaluate MPC comfort, relational meanings likely include liking and sociability (e.g., "You care for me regardless of how upset or happy I am"), affect (e.g., "I can keep talking if I want to because you like me enough to listen"), and positive regard (e.g., "I know you're involved in making sure I don't feel as upset about my problem.").

The relational meaning of HPC comfort accompanies content that explicitly names feelings. HPC comfort should signal inclusion, involvement, and interest: Burgoon and Hale (1984) argued that "one's willingness to accommodate the beliefs and feelings of others ipso facto signals an accessible and inclusive state; it conveys some legitimacy to the other person's definition of things" (p.208). Engaging in perspective-taking should then signal involvement (e.g., "You are committed to seeing me improve and feel better"), and inclusion (e.g., "You understand my feelings because you have felt the same way in the past and you want me to know I'm not alone"). HPC comfort may express similar relational meaning compared to MPC comfort, but these evaluations should invoke a greater degree of receptivity and involvement. Table 2.1 summarizes the potential relational meaning of person-centered comfort.

The purpose of this theoretical postulate is to recognize how relationships are represented in enacted support, and the various meanings which comprise the relationship shared between support provider and support recipient. The recognition of relational meaning raises important questions: What dimensions of relational meaning occur in conjunction with emotional support? How does the relational meaning of emotional support vary within the person-centered framework and in other conceptualizations of emotional support? Is the relational meaning of emotional support related to evaluations including helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness – are relational evaluations separate or similar to overall message evaluations?

Table 2.1: Example Person-Centered Comforting Messages and Potential Relational Meaning

	VPC Hierarchy and Sublevel	Example VPC Comforting Message (Support Provider)	Potential Relational Meaning (Support Recipient Evaluation)
LPC	Condemns feelings of other (1)	"You probably failed because you didn't study enough. You probably just blew the test off, so it's really your own fault and nobody else's"	*Your cold response discounts my feelings completely. I shouldn't share my feelings in our relationship.*
LPC	Speaker challenges the legitimacy of the other's feelings (2)	"You're probably just not trying hard enough - that's why you failed. You really don't have any right to be so upset if you didn't study as hard as you should have."	*You know better than I do what I should feel in this situation. You've already found a way to explain why I feel the way I do so we don't need to talk more.*
LPC	Speaker ignores the feelings being experienced by the other (frequently includes statements telling the other to "forget" about the situation or how the other *should* feel about the situation (3)	"Just forget about the test. There are other more important things in the world than some test in some class. So forget about the test and think about something else."	*You care about me enough to hear what I'm saying, but I don't think you really care why I feel the way I feel. Perhaps you know me better than I know myself, but that doesn't explain why I'm upset.*
MPC	Speaker attempts to divert the other's attention from the distressful situation and the feelings arising from that situation (4)	"You don't have the lowest score, so at least you did better than some people. Let's go out and throw the Frisbee around while the sun's still shining."	*We have one of those types of intimate relationships where we can hang out without saying anything at all. You like me and will continue to like me, regardless of my feelings and emotions.*
MPC	Speaker acknowledges the other's feelings, but does not attempt to help the other understand why those feelings are being experienced or how to cope with them (5)	"I'm sorry you didn't do well on the test. I'm sorry you feel so bad about it. Do you want to talk about the test?"	*You're letting me know that our relationship is a good one where I can keep talking about my feelings if I want or need to. You like me enough to listen.*
MPC	Speaker provides a non-feeling centered explanation of the situation intended to reduce the other's distressed emotional state (6)	"That test was *really* hard and not too many people did well on it. Maybe the questions just hit one of the parts you didn't understand. Or maybe you just studied the wrong thing. These things happen but remember that your grade doesn't depend on just one test score."	*You really want me to know that you "get it" and that you're really involved in making sure I don't feel upset about this.*

Continued,

Table 2.1, Continued: Example Person-Centered Comforting Messages and Potential Relational Meaning

	VPC Hierarchy and Sublevel	Example VPC Comforting Message (Support Provider)	Potential Relational Meaning (Support Recipient Evaluation)
HPC	Speaker explicitly recognizes and acknowledges the other's feelings, but provides only truncated explanations of those feelings (often coupled with attempts to "remedy" the situation) (7)	"Gee, I know you're upset about not doing better on the test. I know you're probably feeling frustrated right now. But the important thing now is to try and look forward and not backward. Study hard for the next test and try not to be too upset about how you did on this exam."	*I am important to you. You are accepting of me and my feelings. It's okay that I feel this way. You believe in my ability to overcome my current emotions and feelings.*
HPC	Speaker provides an elaborated acknowledgement and explanation of the other's feelings (8)	"Well, I know you're upset about this. It's really frustrating and upsetting when you work hard for something and it doesn't pay off. It can really make you feel discouraged. But usually you do pretty well. Everybody has bad days sometimes. You're human and probably just had a bad day. I've failed some tests before, too, and I know how frustrating it can be. I think I can understand how you are feeling."	*You're concerned with me, my feelings, and how I'm managing this problem. You trust me enough to open up to me as well, because that's how we're able to talk about these things. You're not trying to change how I feel because you love me.*
HPC	Speaker helps the other gain a perspective on his or her feelings and attempts to help the other see these feelings in relation to a broader context or the feelings of others (9)	"I understand how frustrating it is to study for a test and then do pretty bad on it. It makes you angry and hurt and takes away a lot of self-confidence. Sometimes you wonder if it's even worth trying. But it doesn't mean you're dumb or anything like that. And maybe you've learned what kind of questions the teacher asks so that you can do better on future tests. Or maybe you know now how the teacher wants you to think about the material. So, although it's probably hard to look at it this way, maybe you've learned something really important that can help you in the future."	*You're giving me so much to think about because of how committed you are to helping me feel better about everything. You've heard what I've said and you want me to know how much I mean to you.*

Note. Descriptions of VPC comfort and example messages originally presented in Burleson and Samter (1985a), Table 2 (p. 114).

Does the relational meaning of problem-focused support vary from emotion-focused support? Does relational meaning mediate the relational effects of enacted support? Are there differences in individual skills at interpreting the relational meaning of person-centered comfort?

Postulate 4: Relational quality varies as a function of enacted emotional support

Relationships are built and developed through communication, but not all relationships are equal. Relationships vary, both in the labels used to classify them (e.g., friend, best friend, family member, acquaintance) and in the quality of these relationships (e.g., close, intimate, committed, loving). What people say matters for our relationships; that is, our communication has consequences for relationships. As Burleson (1995) acknowledged, relationships are skilled accomplishments – there are differences in the ability of people to build and maintain close relationships that meet individual and relational goals. This skillful behavior is based on skillful communication.

If relationships are shaped through communication, then the communicative behaviors and messages of relational partners contribute to perceptions of relationship quality. The evidence for this claim is found in studies of initial interactions: People form impressions of the type of relationship conversational partners will share after initial interactions (Sunnafrank & Ramirez, 2004), and judgments of liking start in these initial interactions (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Sprecher, Treger, Wondra, Hilaire, & Wallpe, 2013). Furthermore, longitudinal studies of relational partners suggest that relational qualities fluctuate based on interpretations of the communicative actions of relational partners (L. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010; Gable et al., 2004). As tempting as it may be to see relationship quality as a stable, enduring characteristic of the overall relationship, Leatham and Duck (1990) called attention to the paradox that relationships "change and fluctuate in the minds of participants as a function of

their experience of one another day to day" (p.7). What relational partners say and do in everyday supportive conversations impacts individual perceptions of feeling better (or worse), improving (or worsening) coping, as well as relational perceptions of feeling more intimate and close (or less intimate and close). Changes in relationship quality represent *outcomes* which follow supportive conversations (Bodie, 2013b).

Perceived partner responsiveness is one perspective explaining how the supportive actions of relational partners impacts relational quality. Perceived partner responsiveness captures the overall evaluation of a partner as caring, intimate, responsive, and understanding (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Perceived partner responsiveness has been studied in supportive conversations where problems are shared. Perceived partner responsiveness and emotional support are associated with greater ratings of caregiver quality following supportive conversations (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Also, greater perceived partner responsiveness predicts relational well-being following supportive conversations, but the strength of these predictions depends on the type of conversation (problem sharing or capitalization) and the biological sex of the support recipient (Gable et al., 2006).

Perceived partner responsiveness has also been studied in capitalization conversations, findings that are especially important for understanding the effects of responsiveness on relational quality. In capitalization conversations, responsiveness has been further refined to focus specifically on active-constructive responsiveness which includes positive responding, reacting enthusiastically and conveying genuine happiness for the good fortune of others (Maisel, Gable, & Strachman, 2008). Active-constructive responsiveness is associated with improved mood, improved event evaluations, and more favorable impressions of a conversational partner (Reis et al., 2010, Study 2); this type of responsiveness also is associated

with increased liking, trust, and closeness (Reis et al., 2010, Study 3). Active-constructive responsiveness is positively associated with perceived intimacy and trust in dating couples (Gable et al., 2004, Study 2). When daily evaluations of responsiveness were elicited about a romantic partner over a two-week period, perceived active-constructive responsiveness was positively associated with daily satisfaction, daily shared positive activities, and intimacy and negatively associated with daily conflicts (Gable et al., 2004, Study 3).

Perceived partner responsiveness is important to understanding how relationships are affected by support, but there are noted limitations of perceived partner responsiveness. Perceived responsiveness "is theorized to underlie expectations that a partner will provide support if needed, presumably because responsive partners are attentive to, and concerned about, each other's personal welfare" (Reis & Collins, 2000, p. 146). Another way to think about responsiveness, then, is that it captures subjective expectations and evaluations of attentiveness and responsiveness which are based on general global qualities of the current relationship (Gable et al., 2006, Sudies 2 and 3; Gable et al., 2004). Responsiveness, then, does not evaluate what a partner specifically says or does in an interaction. Ultimately, a better way to understand how support providers respond and engage in conversations and impact individual and relational outcomes is to focus on the supportive communication enacted in conversation and how these conversational elements impact individual and relational well-being. From these enactments of support, perceived partner supportiveness should arise.

Enacted emotional support may be particularly important for understanding how relationships are changed and transformed by the responsiveness of relational partners. Broadly, definitions of emotional support recognize that emotional support "includes intimacy and attachment, reassurance, and being able to confide in or rely on another – all of which contribute

to the feeling that one is loved and cared about, or even that one is a member of the group, not a stranger" (Schaefer et al., 1981, p. 385). In particular, person-centered comfort may better account for the effects of partner responsiveness on relational outcomes as highly person-centered comfort is perceived as sensitive, responsive, and sympathetic by conversational partners (High & Solomon, 2014) and observers (Burleson & Samter, 1985a, Study 1) of supportive conversations. The content and relational meaning of person-centered comfort expresses concern, caring, understanding, and responsiveness (See Table 2.1). Person-centered comfort may better account for how the actions of relational partners affect relational quality because person-centered comfort contains communication produced with the intention of being responsive towards the feelings and emotions of others. Person-centered comfort is communication which has effects on relational quality, so focusing on the communicative acts which are interpreted may better capture how relational partners influence and effect relationships.

The content of person-centered comfort has been clearly delineated and accounted for, and the empirical knowledge about person-centered comfort can be employed to help understand how person-centered comfort effects relational quality. This perspective relies on perceptions for where it matters – in the individual perceptions and evaluations of effects, versus perceptions of communication – instead of relying on perceptions of communicative behavior.

Additionally, because person-centered enacted support has been organized and classified based on the quality of support, this framework can be used to frame specific predictions for the relational effects of person-centered comfort. Among these findings are results which continue to show that HPC comfort is evaluated as more sensitive and more effective than MPC and LPC support, creating a linear relationship between the quality of support and outcomes (High &

Dillard, 2012). Drawing from findings which account for how person-centered comfort is processed and the numerous effects of person-centered support, I now develop the theoretical framework for how person-centered comfort affects overall relational quality or relationship well-being through specific effects on intimacy, closeness, commitment, liking, loving, and trust.

Intimacy. Intimacy, a central process in the study of relationships, conveys understanding, validation, caring, connection, and "interpersonal acceptance" (Reis & Collins, 2000, p. 148). It is one of the recognized constructs comprising perceived partner responsiveness (Reis & Collins, 2000). Lay conceptualizations of intimacy include notions of self-disclosure, emotional expression, unconditional support, physical contact, and trust (Mansour, 1992; Parks & Floyd, 1996). In other words, relationships are defined as intimate because people share information, express emotions, and offer support in a trusting environment. As such, person-centered comfort should affect evaluations of intimacy because these messages focus on emotional expression and contain support offered in response to the disclosure of feelings and emotions.

The effects of person-centered comfort on intimacy should vary as a function of the quality of person-centered comfort. LPC comfort that criticizes, condemns, and denies emotions should decrease perceived intimacy because it ignores expressed emotions. LPC comfort does not encourage further emotional expression and disclosure. Both MPC and HPC comfort should increase perceived intimacy, because these messages signal acceptance and convey understanding of the plight of the distressed other. HPC comfort explicitly recognizes feelings, while MPC comfort only implicitly acknowledges feelings through non-feeling centered explanations. HPC comfort should have a greater effect on perceived intimacy compared to MPC comfort. The hypothesized effects of person-centered comfort should generate a positive linear

relationship where higher quality person-centered comfort increases perceived intimacy, in line with Person Centered Theory (High & Dillard, 2012; Jones & Bodie, 2014).

One factor which may moderate this hypothesized relationship is the *type* of relationship shared between relational partners. Intimacy has been associated with *relational uncertainty*, doubts and questions about the future of the relationship (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Theiss and Solomon (2008) found weekly ratings of relationship uncertainty were negatively associated with intimacy; when partners perceive increased relational uncertainty, these partners report decreased intimacy.

When relational partners are uncertain of the future of their relationship, these relational partners may be particularly attuned to the relational effects of intimacy. The dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes recognizes that there are various individual and situational factors which account for differences in the motivation and ability to process messages at higher levels of elaboration, taking the time to thoughtfully attend to the content of supportive messages (Bodie & Burleson, 2008). The relationship between relational partners is one such situational factor: When a person is in a relationship characterized by high uncertainty he or she is likely more motivated to attend to the support offered in everyday conversation and these messages more closely. People with more relational uncertainty should be more sensitive to perceived intimacy, reporting greater increases in intimacy following HPC comfort and MPC comfort, and greater decreases in intimacy following LPC comfort. In comparison, in relationships marked with high certainty (e.g., long-term friendships, parent/child relationships), the effects of intimacy will still vary as a function of person-centered support, producing a linear effect where LPC comfort is associated with decreased intimacy and MPC and HPC comfort increasing intimacy, but the differences between the VPC quality of emotional support will not be as great.

Closeness. Closeness is the "degree of affective, cognitive, and behavioral mutual dependence between two people" (Dibble, Levine, & Park, 2011, p. 565). Closeness captures the interdependence of relational partners, where interdependence is marked by high degrees of mutual dependability and impact (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). Closeness is associated with commitment (Rusbult et al., 1998); however, the conceptualizations of closeness and intimacy in friendships suggest people distinguish between those terms (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Intimacy is distinguished from closeness in friendships because intimacy is seen as a quality of romantic or sexual relationships, and less intimate relationships are marked by limited disclosure, affection, and interaction (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Closeness is associated with commitment and satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998). The relational quality of closeness should be affected by person-centered comfort because person-centered messages are produced in response to the distressed relational partner's current emotional distress.

The effects of person-centered comfort on closeness should vary as a function of the quality of VPC expressed in the comforting message. LPC comfort does not express mutual dependency or interdependence – by denying or criticizing the feelings of a distressed relational partner, these messages may be perceived as, "I'm not impacted by your emotional distress, so I don't care how you feel," resulting in decreased perceptions of closeness. MPC comfort should increase perceptions of closeness. Moderate person-centered comforting messages acknowledge and encourage engaging in joint activities to distract from emotions; some research shows closeness involves doing activities together (Parks & Floyd, 1996). HPC comfort should also increase perceptions of closeness because these messages express intimacy and knowledge of feelings. While this relationship is still hypothesized to be linear, the difference in perceived closeness produced by MPC comfort versus HPC comfort may be less when compared to the

decreases in closeness produced by LPC comfort. The reason for this hypothesized difference is because of how language is used to express involvement in MPC and HPC comfort. MPC and HPC comfort both reference mutual knowledge, or knowledge shared between two people used in interaction; when used in conversation, mutual knowledge "may become the basis for mutual understanding and closeness" (Planalp & Garvin-Doxas, 1994, p. 3). MPC comfort primarily uses mutual knowledge about the problem or experience (e.g., "Not too many people did well;" "You don't have the lowest score"), while HPC comfort applies mutual knowledge about the relational partner (e.g., "I know this is upsetting for you;" "You usually do well"). To summarize the effects of closeness, LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort should follow a linear pattern (High & Dillard, 2012), but the hypothesized differences between MPC comfort and HPC comfort should be of a smaller magnitude than the differences between LPC comfort and MPC comfort or LPC comfort and HPC comfort.

Commitment. Commitment is "the tendency to maintain a relationship and feel psychologically dependent (in the sense of connected) on it" (Reis & Collins, 2000, p. 151). Commitment captures a desire to continue the current relationship – the ultimate representation of how communication influences relationships because if partners do not see the relationship as one where information can be disclosed, emotions can be expressed, and partners can be counted on to show their commitment to the relationship, this relationship is not likely to continue if there are viable alternatives for support, companionship, and affection. Commitment is distinct from satisfaction (Rusbult et al., 1998).

Perceptions of commitment should vary as a function of VPC comforting quality. By denying the experiences and feelings of a distressed relational partner and telling the distressed relational partner how he or she should feel, LPC comfort signals the support provider's desire to

control the supportive conversation. By telling the distressed partner how to feel (or what to not feel), the support provider is giving insight into their perspective on the current relationship as a relationship where the exploration and acknowledgement of feelings and emotions should not occur. LPC comfort is insensitive and does not signal concern for the relational partner; as such, it should decrease perceived commitment. MPC comfort should increase perceived commitment following enacted support conversations because by (implicitly) acknowledging the feelings of others, a support provider is signaling their commitment to listening to a distressed other and a desire to see their feelings improve. HPC comfort should greatly increase perceptions of commitment because the exploration and elaboration of feelings signal greater sensitivity and concern for the improvement of a distressed relational partner. In line with predictions for intimacy and closeness, the effects of VPC comfort on commitment should follow a linear pattern where HPC comfort increases perceptions of commitment and LPC comfort decreases perceptions of commitment. MPC comfort should moderately increase perceptions of commitment, but to a lessened degree compared to HPC comfort.

Trust. Trust "captures the degree to which individuals believe they can count on their current relationship partner to meet their most fundamental needs and to facilitate their most important goals" (L. Campbell et al., 2010, p. 14). Some conceptualizations of intimacy recognize trust as a component of intimacy (Mansour, 1992) and closeness (Parks & Floyd, 1996), but trust has been found to vary as a distinct construct of relational quality (Fletcher et al., 2000). Reis and Collins (2000) recognized partners adjust their levels of trust following interaction, so the quality of person-centered support offered in interaction should impact evaluations of trust.

Perceptions of trust should vary as a function of VPC comforting quality, where LPC comfort produces decreased perceptions of trust and MPC and HPC comfort both produce increased perceptions of trust. First, trust is based in interaction. Perceptions of trust "evolve out of past experience and prior interaction" (Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985, p. 96). Trust-diagnostic situations occur during daily interaction when "partners make decisions that go against their own personal self-interest and support the best interests of the individual or the relationship" (Simpson, 2007, p. 265); supportive conversations, as they involve emotional expression and self-disclosure, may be trust-diagnostic situations. Sharing emotions is important for relationships (Rimé, 2009). LPC comfort denies and criticizes the expression of emotions, and these current experiences and prior experiences should decrease perceptions of the relational partner as supportive of the other's best interests. LPC comfort signals self-interest in not wanting to discuss another person's feelings. LPC comfort does not express the support provider's ability (or motivation) to help their distressed relational partner meet their functional goal of alleviating upset. MPC and HPC comfort both create an environment where feelings and emotions are safely discussed; in these trust-diagnostic situations a partner is likely to draw from these experiences to feel more trusting of the support provider. In line with Person Centered Theory, however, HPC comfort should produce greater increases in trust. The complexity and elaboration of HPC comfort explicitly validates the feelings of a distressed relational partner. HPC comfort offers new perspectives and ways of seeing the feelings and emotions experienced; these responses should increase perceptions of trust because the support provider is empathic and orienting themselves to the feelings and experiences of the distressed relational partner. By putting themselves in the proverbial shoes of the distressed other, support providers are demonstrating their involvement in the experiences of their relational partner. HPC comfort

should increase perceptions of trust, resulting in increases of perceived trust that are greater than MPC comfort. LPC comfort should decrease perceptions of trust.

Perceptions of trust may be moderated by the *type* of relationship shared between relational partners. Reis and Collins (2000) have suggested that "circumstances in which help and support are needed or desired seem particularly likely to influence development of trust" (p. 149), suggesting that person-centered comfort offered to alleviate the feelings and emotions of a distressed relational partner should then have a greater influence for newer relationships, those that have fewer prior experiences upon which to draw. Furthermore, trust has been associated with relational stability in that individuals with lower trust experience greater variability in satisfaction over a two-week period (L. Campbell et al., 2010). The linear relationship of outcomes should hold, but the strength of this relationship will differ for long-term relational partners and newly developing relationships which are more dependent on these trust-diagnostic situations for defining relational quality (Simpson, 2007). Differences between developing and stable relationships should moderate the effects of person-centered quality on trust such that greater differences in evaluations are observed in developing relationships.

Loving. Love is typically represented by two dimensions: *passionate love* and *compassionate love.* Reis and Collins (2000) explained the distinction between passionate love and compassionate love is that passionate love is "characterized by strong emotions and a desire for union with another, whereas the latter [compassionate love] concerns affection and respect felt for someone with whom one's live is intertwined" (p. 154). These two love dimensions are related yet distinct from trust, intimacy, and satisfaction (Fletcher et al., 2000)

Person-centered comfort should produce a linear association between VPC comforting quality and perceptions of loving. Loving signals emotions and felt affection; thus, LPC comfort

should decrease perceptions of loving, MPC comfort should increase perceptions of loving, and HPC comfort should increase perceptions of loving in a greater degree than MPC support. Loving is strongly associated with the current quality of the relationship, more so than the other qualities; as such, one conversation including HPC, LPC, or MPC comfort will not completely override current feelings of love. Love felt for friends, family, and romantic partners is not likely to be overruled by a single LPC comforting message at least for relatively stable relationships, even if the messages are particularly memorable (Knapp, Stohl, & Reardon, 1981). However, immediate perceptions of love should still be affected by the quality of support following supportive conversations. When relational partners offer LPC comfort to a distressed relational partner by denying feelings and challenge legitimacy of emotions, the perceptions of these messages are not likely to completely override the love already felt for the partner, but because these messages are insensitive and unhelpful, there should be a slight decrease in perceived loving immediately following supportive conversations. MPC comfort should slightly increase perceptions of loving, as these messages express concern for the distressed relational partner and his or her feelings. MPC comfort expresses affection; this affection should increase perceptions of loving because loving and affection are related constructs (Floyd & Morman, 1998). HPC comfort should also increase perceived loving. Following the theoretical logic of the third postulate, HPC comfort should be evaluated as expressing relational meanings of intimacy, receptivity, and similarity; these dimensions of relational communication positively predict liking and loving in sibling relationships (Myers et al., 1999). HPC comfort should produce greater degrees of loving following enacted support conversations.

Liking. *Liking* includes perceptions of similarity, respect, and positive evaluations; liking is considered a distinct evaluation from loving (Rubin, 1973). The quality of person-

centered messages should produce varying perceptions of *liking.* First, self-disclosure is associated with increases in reported liking, but the intimacy of these self-disclosures matter (Collins & Miller, 1994). LPC comfort should decrease liking because it is insensitive and quite direct in disapproving and discouraging emotional expression. When LPC comfort is offered, it denies and criticizes the emotional experiences and problems disclosed in the conversation. MPC comfort should increase perceptions of liking because MPC comfort reflects sensitivity, implicit acceptance of the emotions shared and disclosed, and expressing involvement and concern for the distressed other. HPC comfort explicitly recognizes feelings and elaborates on these feelings, so HPC comfort should have a greater effect on perceived liking. In HPC comfort, relational partners are accepting and nonjudgmental of a relational partner's disclosures; HPC comforting responses accept the information presented and explicitly recognize the experiences of others. Empathy is associated with the production of higher quality person-centered comforting messages (Burleson, 1983). Relational partners receiving emotional support may be especially attuned to the empathy expressed in HPC comfort and report liking their partner more after a supportive conversation. Variations in VPC comfort should generate a positive linear relationship where HPC and MPC comfort are associated with increases in liking, while LPC comfort is associated with decreases in liking.

Relational satisfaction. Relational satisfaction represents "positive versus negative affect experienced in a relationship" (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 359). This definition is brief, but it is important to recognize that affect is derived from experiences *in* the relationship, versus affect solely directed towards a person or about the self. Reis and Collins (2000) recognized that satisfaction is an affective quality reflecting sentiment in relationships, where "sentiments provide powerful heuristics that may influence other judgments" (p. 152). It makes sense, then,

that the one study to examine the relational effects of enacted emotional support focused on relational satisfaction, versus the other qualities associated with relational well-being (Afifi et al., 2013). Based on these findings, HPC comfort should increase perceptions of relational satisfaction, while LPC comforting messages should decrease perceptions of relational satisfaction. Because Afifi et al. (2013) operationalized "good" support as HPC comfort and "bad" support as LPC comfort in line with their research goals and hypotheses, the effect of MPC comfort on relational satisfaction must be further considered. Further, Afifi et al. (2013) operationalized 'good' support as including expressions of high nonverbal immediacy; verbal person-centeredness and nonverbal immediacy are not interchangeable constructs (Jones & Guerrero, 2001), suggesting the need for future research to isolate and study particular features of verbal messages like VPC comfort. Following the predictions from PCT about variations in VPC comfort, MPC comfort should have a slightly positive effect on relational satisfaction, but compared to HPC comfort this difference will have a smaller magnitude of effect.

In line with theoretical predictions of PCT, MPC comfort should also increase perceptions of relational satisfaction, but to a lesser degree than HPC comfort. HPC comfort is consistently evaluated as more effective, sensitive, and appropriate than MPC support (High & Dillard, 2012); as such, HPC comfort should express a greater degree of concern, caring, and involvement which leads to greater increases in relational satisfaction. MPC comfort expresses acceptance and positive regard for the person through implicit recognition of emotions and feelings. HPC comfort explicitly acknowledges feelings, showing acceptance and affective expression towards the emotions and feelings another person is currently experiencing. Because HPC comfort is accepting and nonjudgmental, it should positively affect perceived relational satisfaction. MPC comfort is positive and caring, but without elaborating on the concern a

support provider has for their relational partner, so the increases in relational satisfaction should be of a smaller magnitude. LPC comfort denies, criticizes, and condemns; resulting in decreased relational satisfaction.

Overall relational quality. When a person is called on to report on relationship quality, one concern is that there may be indistinguishable differences between purportedly different relationship qualities, meaning these theorized differences may not be observable when operationalized in studies and experiments. John Gottman (1999) called this the 'glop' problem, which is addressed through clear identification of theoretical terms and the use of structural equation modeling and mutlitrait-multimethod matrices in the operationalization and measurement of these theoretical terms (Bank, Dishion, Skinner, & Patterson, 1990; D. T. Campbell & Fiske, 1959), as well as discriminant function analysis of constructs to account for random error, specific factor error, and transient error (Shaffer, DeGeest, & Li, 2015).

Testing multidimensional factor models of relational quality, Fletcher et al. (2000) statistically identified relational satisfaction, intimacy, closeness, commitment, loving (passionate and compassionate), and trust as distinct factors under the higher order construct of relational quality. Fletcher et al. (2000) recognized the importance of reviewing the face validity of scales and measures used to operationalize these constructs; in the interest of including more items to counter internal reliability and consistency, some measures include items assessing other, distinct constructs. The current theoretical framework includes these dimensions as distinct constructs. In line with PCT, these relational qualities follow a general linear trend, but the slope of this linear trend is not predicted to be the same for all relational qualities described. It is possible that these constructs could be combined to evaluate overall relational quality, but this would need empirical testing.

Another aspect of overall relational quality is that relational quality may be generally associated with supportive relationships. The major theoretical advancement of this framework is that support produces a variety of relational effects or outcomes, but these relational qualities may share general associations with the provision of enacted emotional support, due to differences in the ability to produce supportive messages (Burleson, 1985, 2003). Burleson (1994a) theorized supportive messages "may have a cumulative effect on the quality of a helper's relationship with others" (p.144), where the consistent use of sophisticated comforting strategies results in greater liking and larger support networks. The relational qualities here may be generally associated with the typical supportive responses used by support providers. Support providers who frequently use HPC and MPC comfort in enacted conversations are likely to have closer, more intimate and satisfying relationships, because support providers continue to validate and recognize the various emotional experiences expressed in everyday enacted support conversations. The frequent use of LPC comfort should be associated with less close, intimate, and satisfying relationships as these relational partners continue to enact conversations where the expression of emotions are discouraged and the sharing of emotions is met with responses which invalidate, discredit, and deny the feelings and emotions of others. When studying overall relational quality, there should be general associations between relational quality and the typical use of LPC, MPC, and HPC comforting communication in everyday supportive conversations. Further, there should be long-term relational effects of person-centered comfort.

This fourth theoretical postulate raises intriguing questions. For instance, are people able to distinguish between these distinct effects which represent relational quality? Can these relational qualities be employed to generate an overall index of relational quality? Are there

other relational qualities which should also be included? Are these relational qualities expressed in the relational meaning of person-centered support?

Some potential questions are particularly important in the framework of PCT and the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Jones & Bodie, 2014). The dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes identifies individual and situational factors that moderate the ability and motivation of a support recipient to process messages as high levels of elaboration. While two moderating relationships were predicted from the empirical knowledge generated about the qualities of intimacy and trust, are there other moderating factors? Are there individual or relational qualities which moderate the interpretation of relational quality?

Postulate 5: There is individual variability in the identification of relational meaning and for the relational effects of enacted emotional support

People differ in their ability and desire to process person-centered comfort. The dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes recognizes individual and situational differences which account for differences in the motivation and ability to process supportive messages at high levels of elaboration (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Burleson, 2009). High levels of elaboration, where people closely attend to and consider supportive messages, is responsible for the lasting and enduring effects of supportive messages. When people process messages at low levels of elaboration they tend to rely on heuristic cues of the situation (including accessible cues derived about the current relationship and relational partner providing support), environmental cues, and individual differences to make sense of enacted support. The effects of low elaboration processing are brief. Within the current theoretical framework, high elaboration is important as without detailed thought and attention to the relational meaning and effects of person-centered support, people may use heuristic cues about the relationship to evaluate and process relational

effects (e.g., "He/she is my friend so of course his/her support is high quality and positively impacts our relationship"). Heuristic cues would lead to only brief and temporary relational effects. Within the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes, situational and environmental cues like stressor severity and support provider sex moderate the effects of verbal person-centered support (Holmstrom et al., 2015); these and other factors should be included when investigating the relational effects of person-centered comfort.

There are other individual differences which may explain why people may be particularly motivated to process the relational implications of support. The differences identified here are those factors which are most relevant to the study of relational processes and relational outcomes; there are, of course, other differences which may influence the processing and evaluation of the relational effects of comforting messages, but the identified factors draw from extant empirical research. Attachment and cognitive complexity are identified as moderating factors in the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes, and these factors are particularly relevant for the processing of relational meaning.

Attachment. Attachment is recognized as a moderating factor in the dual-process theoretical framework (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Burleson, 2009). Attachment styles are an integral part of relationship research and represent differences in internal working models of how a person sees him or herself and their intimate relational partners (Bowlby, 1988; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Attachment styles represent underlying dimensions of anxiety and avoidance: Attachment styles include *secure attachment*, where partners rely on others for support and feel valued and close in intimate relationships; *preoccupied*, where partners have a heightened desire for dependency and closeness and greater concern about rejection; *fearful-avoidant*, marked by high anxiety and avoidance where partners desire close relationships but avoid intimacy due to

heightened concerns of rejection; and *dismissing avoidant*, where relational partners do not value close relationships, instead valuing self-reliance and independence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998; Guerrero, 2008).[1]

Attachment is relevant for relational qualities and enacted support. The secure attachment style is associated with greater interdependence (e.g., closeness), commitment, trust, and satisfaction in romantic relationships, as well as the experience of frequent positive emotions and less frequent negative emotions in romantic relationships (Simpson, 1990); though there is evidence to suggest the general association between attachment styles and relational satisfaction is mediated by reported emotional communication (Guerrero, Farinelli, & McEwan, 2009). Attachment styles are associated with perceived capitalization support and relational satisfaction (Gosnell & Gable, 2013). Attachment styles partially account for differences in a person's reported motivation to provide support (Feeney, Collins, van Vleet, & Tomlinson, 2013). Attachment-related avoidance is associated with a distressed relational partner's use of indirect support-seeking behaviors in a supportive interaction (Collins & Feeney, 2000). Men with secure attachment styles provided dating partners with greater emotional support and reassurance prior to a stressful task (Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992).

Attachment styles should moderate the influence of person-centered support on relationship effects, in line with the dual-process framework (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Burleson, 2009). Attachment styles impact the preference for person-centered support (Lemieux & Tighe, 2004); attachment styles are associated with the evaluation of LPC comforting messages, where people with dismissing and preoccupied attachment styles evaluate LPC comfort as more

[1] It is, however, important to acknowledge that individual differences in attachment style represent internal working models of relationships. Individuals do experience variability in their expressed attachment style; an individual's attachment style can vary from adolescence to adulthood and may also vary within different intimate relationships (Guerrero, 2008). The introduction of attachment styles as a potential moderating factor recognizes the importance of identifying and explaining variation in the production and processing of enacted support under the fifth postulate.

positive than people with secure and fearful avoidant styles, though these differences were not observed for the evaluation of HPC comfort (Jones, 2005). The evaluation of person-centered support may have a stronger effect for individuals low in attachment-related avoidance (Bodie, Burleson, Gill-Rosier, et al., 2011). When evaluating the relational effects of person-centered support, people with preoccupied and fearful avoidant styles may be particularly sensitive to the relational effects of person-centered support because of an increased fear of rejection by the relational partner. People with dismissive avoidant attachment styles may be less sensitive to the relational meaning of person-centered support and in turn report a smaller degree of change in the relational effects of person-centered support because of the low value placed on establishing and maintaining personal relationships.

Cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity is recognized in the dual-process framework (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Burleson, 2009). *Interpersonal cognitive complexity* captures differences in social perception and how people perceive, organize, and access information about the social world. Social perception "plays a crucial role in virtually all communicative conduct" (Burleson & Rack, 2008, p. 56). When people decide what exactly a friend meant by their LPC, MPC, or HPC comforting message (or produce these messages themselves), they tap into their interpersonal constructs which capture abstract characteristics or qualities about people and how people interact with others (Kelly, 1963). Interpersonal cognitive complexity assesses differences in differentiation, the number of personal constructs available to describe the social world; abstractness, or the refinement of the personal construct system; and integration, or how the personal construct system is organized and connected (Burleson & Caplan, 1998). People low in interpersonal cognitive complexity have relatively simple personal construct systems, while people high in interpersonal cognitive complexity have abstract,

integrated, and differentiated construct systems. Our interpersonal construct system is associated with our social experiences in relationships and the messages we produce in relationships (Applegate & Delia, 1980), making interpersonal cognitive complexity especially important in the study of relationships and person-centered messages.

Both person-centered comforting and interpersonal cognitive complexity are part of Constructivism, one of the earliest "home-grown" theories within the discipline of Communication Studies (Jones & Bodie, 2014). Constructivism recognizes the active participation of people in their social world, which is changed, developed, modified, and repaired through communication and interaction (Delia, O'Keefe, & O'Keefe, 1982). The associations between interpersonal cognitive complexity and the production of person-centered messages are based in constructivist theory as HPC comforting messages adapt and respond to "the unique qualities of individuals and contexts as the basis for the creation of social relationships" (Applegate, 1980, p. 61). The associations between interpersonal cognitive complexity and person-centered messages have also been studied empirically; these results suggest interpersonal cognitive complexity is associated with the ability to produce person-centered support as well as differences in the ability to interpret and discern differences in the quality of person-centered support (Bodie, Burleson, Holmstrom, et al., 2011; Burleson, 1987; Burleson & Caplan, 1998; Burleson & Samter, 1985b; Samter, Burleson, & Basden-Murphy, 1989).

Interpersonal cognitive complexity should moderate differences in the interpretation and evaluation of the relational effects of person-centered comforting messages. People with greater interpersonal construct differentiation have interpersonal construct systems which are highly refined in observing and explaining differences in the mannerisms, beliefs, and actions of others. People with higher differentiation of interpersonal cognitive complexity should be able to discern

more sharply between the relational effects of LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort because these individuals have a greater awareness of the social actions of others. For people with greater degrees of interpersonal construct differentiation, satisfaction, intimacy, closeness, commitment, liking, loving, and trust are distinct outcomes. Furthermore, these individuals should be able to better identify the relational meaning of person-centered messages, having more constructs accessible and available to describe the intended meaning of their relational partners. Interpersonal cognitive complexity is an important difference in how people think about social relationships with others, and should, in turn, produce differences in how people interpret relational meaning and the relational effects of enacted emotional support.

Importance of affective communication skills. Affectively-oriented communication skills include *ego support*, or the relational partner's ability to make others feel their ideas are worthwhile and make others feel better about their general skills and abilities; and *comforting*, or the ability of a relational partner to make others feel better and understand their feelings and emotions (Burleson & Samter, 1990).

People place different values on the affective skills of relational partners. People with greater levels of attachment avoidance evaluate affective skills as less important than people with non-avoidant attachment (Jones, 2005). People lower in interpersonal cognitive complexity rate the comforting skills of friends as less important (Burleson & Samter, 1990). Lonely people also rate affective skills including both ego support and comforting skills as less important (Samter, 1992, 1994); people are attracted to individuals with similar levels of cognitive complexity and similar preferences for affective skills (Burleson & Samter, 1996). Friends are similar in their valuation of affective skills (Burleson et al., 1992).

How people value affective skills may impact how relational effects are evaluated. If these skills are highly valued, then relational partners may expect their relational partners to provide quality support in enacted conversations. People who highly value affective skills may then report greater increases in perceived relational satisfaction, intimacy, closeness, commitment, loving, liking, and trust following enacted support conversations when their partners provide MPC and HPC comfort than people who do not value affective communication skills. People who rank affective communication skills as not very important may not report changes in relational effects following enacted emotional support. Recognizing the direct link between comforting skills and the comforting quality of VPC support, people who value affective communication skills should be more sensitive to the relational effects of VPC comfort.

The fifth postulate opens up the opportunity to integrate additional theoretical perspectives to account for individual variation in the relational effects of enacted emotional support. Like the other postulates advanced in this theoretical framework, the fifth postulate recognizes the assumptions acknowledged in other empirical research on supportive communication and relationships. Individual differences, particularly differences in how people perceive and organize information about the social world, differences in the conceptualization of intimate relationships, and differences in the value placed on particular communicative skills in relationships should account for differences in the evaluation of relational meaning and changes in perceived relationship quality.

Conclusion

This chapter presented five theoretical postulates that identify the context in which enacted emotional support occurs, the relational effects of enacted emotional support, and the individual factors which may account for the interpretation and evaluation of the relational effects of enacted emotional support. Within these theoretical postulates, the relational

communication conveyed by person-centered support was explored, recognizing the dimensions of relational communication used to express inclusion, control, affiliation, and acceptance. The specific dimensions of relational quality, including relational satisfaction, intimacy, closeness, commitment, loving, liking, and trust were all theorized to vary as a function of the quality of enacted emotional support. Individual and situational differences were identified as factors which may account for variation in the evaluation and interpretation of the relational effects of enacted emotional support. The following chapter presents a study derived from these theoretical postulates which tests the relational meaning and relational outcomes of person-centered comforting messages.

CHAPTER 3
STUDY ONE:
INITIAL EVIDENCE THAT VARIATION IN PERSON-CENTERED COMFORTING QUALITY DIFFERENTIALLY INFLUENCE RELATIONAL EFFECTS

This chapter presents a study that tests hypotheses drawn from the theoretical postulates advanced in Chapter 2. First, Postulate 2 identifies the individual and relational effects of emotional support: I employ this theoretical postulate to test the relational effects of person-centered comforting, a message property relevant to emotionally supportive messages. Second, I draw upon Postulate 3 concerning content and relational meaning of emotional support in order to test evaluations of relational meaning, integrating Relational Framing Theory into the current study. Third, I recognize that relational quality varies as a function of emotional support, drawing from the postulate with the same claim (Postulate 4). From Postulate 4, specific hypotheses are made predicting how relational effects vary as a function of person-centered comfort. In addition, based on the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes, I make predictions regarding the moderating influence of the type of relationship, stressor severity, and support provider sex on the message-outcome relationship. After an introduction, I introduce the rationale behind the seven hypotheses and one research question. I present the results of a between-subjects study utilizing standardized person-centered comforting messages and sixteen separate dependent variables, before discussing the results. I conclude by discussing limitations of the current study, some of which are addressed by a study presented in Chapter 4.

The Relational Effects of Person-Centered Comforting Messages

Everyday conversations are important for well-being (Duck et al., 1991). Happiness and satisfaction are greater when everyday conversations move beyond small talk (Mehl et al., 2010).

Relationships are constituted in these everyday conversations (Goldsmith & Baxter, 1996), and everyday conversations impact satisfaction with family members (Schrodt et al., 2008), friends (Ledbetter, Broeckelman-Post, & Krawsczyn, 2011), and romantic partners (Dainton, 1998). Everyday conversations feature the sharing of emotions which functions to increase well-being and strengthen social ties (Rimé, 2009). When sharing emotions in conversations, close relational partners may offer support (Leatham & Duck, 1990) in an effort to comfort and acknowledge feelings of upset based upon the experience of everyday stressors and problems (MacGeorge et al., 2011).

Close relationships are built on shared knowledge and experiences (Planalp, 1985; Planalp & Garvin-Doxas, 1994), but knowing someone well does not necessarily mean that support within that relationship is welcome, appropriate, or effective (Dakof & Taylor, 1990; Lehman, Ellard, & Wortman, 1986; Lehman & Hemphill, 1990). Verbal person-centeredness (VPC) is a theoretical property of comforting messages that captures the degree to which a support attempt expresses "an awareness of and adaptation to the affective, subjective, and *relational aspects* of communication contexts" (Burleson, 1987, p. 305, emphasis added). Comforting messages vary in the quality of VPC expressed; highly person-centered (HPC) comfort represents higher quality support compared to moderately person-centered (MPC) comfort or low person-centered (LPC) comfort (High & Dillard, 2012). HPC comfort produces a greater degree of emotional improvement (Jones, 2004), and is evaluated as more helpful and sensitive than MPC or LPC comfort (Bodie et al., 2012; Jones & Burleson, 2003).

There also is evidence that higher quality comfort is associated with one characteristic of relationship quality, increased relational satisfaction (Afifi et al., 2013; Samter, 1994). In addition to satisfaction, relationship quality is represented by closeness, intimacy, and

commitment (Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b; Sprecher et al., 1995). The quality of VPC comfort should not only acknowledge the relational context of supportive conversations, but variations in VPC comfort also should produce other relational effects.

Person Centered Theory and Relational Communication

Person Centered Theory (PCT) has roots in the constructivist approach to message production, processing, and interaction coordination (Burleson, 1984b, 1994b; Delia et al., 1982; Jones & Bodie, 2014). Within PCT, variations in the quality of comforting messages are classified in a hierarchical arrangement recognizing the degree to which comforting messages explicitly acknowledge and lend validity to expressed emotions (Applegate, 1980; Burleson, 1984b). LPC comfort condemns, criticizes, denies, or ignores the feelings of a relational partner; MPC comfort implicitly recognizes feelings of upset, but provides non-feeling focused explanations or offers distractions instead of elaborating upon these feelings; and HPC comfort explicitly names and elaborates on the feelings of others, helping a relational partner consider other perspectives (Burleson, 1994a, 2003).

Research has identified two broad classes of effects of VPC comfort (Bodie et al., 2012). The first, *message evaluations*, capture judgments of comforting messages (Bodie, 2013b). Within evaluations, scholars have identified judgments of the helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness, all of which are higher for HPC compared to MPC or LPC support (Bodie et al., 2012; Jones, 2004). The second, *message outcomes*, capture the cognitive, affective, or behavioral consequences occurring after support is received (Bodie, 2013b; Bodie et al., 2012); For instance, HPC comfort produces a greater degree of emotional improvement compared to MPC comfort or LPC comfort (Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Jones, 2004).

Although the identification of these broad classes of effects has been theoretically useful (e.g., it has allowed scholars to test theories that posit an indirect effect for VPC on emotional improvement as a function of how enacted support was processed, see Bodie et al., 2012, Study 2; High & Solomon, 2016), ignored in this classification of message effects are the specific ways in which the person-centered quality of comforting communication has relational implications. Similar to the message evaluation and message outcome classification, however, the effects of VPC comfort on relationships can be separated into more immediate evaluations and more distal outcomes (Burleson, 1994b; MacGeorge, 2009). In other words, I propose that the study of how VPC comfort impacts relationships should consist of evaluations of both its impact on how support recipients make relational meaning judgments and how these messages cause changes in perceived relational quality.

Relational Meaning of Person Centered Comfort

An axiom of human communication is that communication expresses content and relational meaning (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Content meaning represents the information expressed, similar to the denotative meaning of messages (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Different types of support, including emotional, informational, and tangible support, vary based on content (Cobb, 1976; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Similarly, PCT recognizes and organizes comforting messages based on differences in the content of these messages (Burleson, 1985). Supportive communication, including comforting messages, should also express relational meaning. Relational meaning represents how messages should be taken, referencing "the *relationship* between communicants" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 52, emphasis in original). Comforting messages which vary in the expression of VPC comfort should differ in the expression and evaluations of relational meaning.

Relational communication is a rich area of inquiry, but the various themes of relational communication can be organized into expressions of affiliation or relational control (Burgoon & Hale, 1984). Affiliation represents the expression of liking, loving, and solidarity one relational partner feels for another (Dillard et al., 1999); relational control represents the expression of dominance and influence one relational partner feels towards the other (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Watzlawick et al., 1967).

Relational Framing Theory (RFT) theorizes how the meanings of affiliation and relational control are processed and evaluated. RFT posits the relational meanings of affiliation and relational control are best conceived of as relational frames, innate mental structures which are activated when interpreting and evaluating the relational meaning of messages (Dillard et al., 1996; Solomon & McLaren, 2008). RFT represents affiliation and relational control as bipolar structures such that affiliation ranges from affiliation to disaffiliation, and relational control ranges from dominance to submissiveness.[2] Within RFT, the *differential salience hypothesis* predicts that effective processing of relational meaning occurs when the saliency, or relevancy, of one frame is activated and the other frame is inhibited. Frame activation and saliency judgments differ based on the cooperative (or competitive) nature of a relationship (Dillard et al., 1996), the friendly (or manipulative) context of an interaction (McLaren, Dillard, Tusing, & Solomon, 2014), as well individual dispositional differences (Solomon, Dillard, & Anderson, 2002).

[2] Relational Framing Theory also explicates the role of involvement, a unipolar construct, in the framing process. Involvement includes judgments of intensity of expression and "can inform inferences about either dominance-submissiveness or affiliation-disaffiliation" (Solomon & McLaren, 2008, p. 105). In this initial development and testing of the relational effects of comforting messages, a thorough analysis of the bipolar constructs is first needed to determine if there are variations in the relational meaning of VPC comfort before theorizing on the role of intensity.

Relational evaluations of comforting should vary as a function of the VPC comforting quality of those messages. HPC comfort that elaborates on feelings and emotions (e.g., "I know how hard you worked at this, of course you feel hurt") may be interpreted as expressing a greater degree of affiliative meaning by a support recipient. MPC comfort, because it implicitly acknowledges another's feelings (e.g., "I'm sorry, lots of people feel this way"), may still be interpreted as expressing affiliation to the support recipient, but a reliance on non-feeling centered explanations may be perceived as less affiliative compared to HPC comfort. LPC comfort that condemns or denies the feelings of a distressed other ("I can't believe you're feeling hurt about something so stupid") may be evaluated as particularly disaffiliative because support providers do not make an attempt to acknowledge feelings, dismissing the experiences and upset felt by a distressed relational partner. Following this logic,

H1: Evaluations of affiliation vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that HPC comfort is perceived as expressing the greatest affiliation followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort is perceived as expressing the least affiliation.

Relational meaning may also be processed through the relational frame of dominance-submissiveness; similarly, these relational evaluations should vary based on the VPC quality expressed in a comforting message. LPC comfort denies, criticizes, and condemns emotions ("Don't bother being upset"), which may be evaluated as an attempt to control the current feelings and emotions of a distressed relational partner. The provision of MPC comfort may be evaluated as expressing relational control, especially when MPC comfort expresses activities and alternatives which distract from current emotional states; however, LPC comfort should still be evaluated as expressing a greater degree of relational control compared to MPC comfort because of the direct denial, criticism, and condemnation of emotions expressed in LPC comfort. Because

HPC comfort names and elaborates on the feelings of a distressed relational partner, comforting messages high in person-centeredness may be interpreted as accepting another person's experiences, resulting in reduced evaluations of relational control.

H2: Evaluations of relational control vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that LPC comfort is perceived as expressing the greatest dominance followed by MPC comfort; HPC comfort is perceived as expressing the least dominance.

The empirical tests of H1 and H2 are based on RFT, but prior conceptualizations of relational communication provide added breadth to evaluations of affiliation and relational control. RFT recognizes affiliation and dominance as central to all relational judgments, but acknowledge "the experience of dominance and affiliation may vary in degree and may be nuanced within these umbrella concepts" (Dillard et al., 1996, p. 705). Recognizing the nuance within the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, judgments of affiliation should also include evaluations of affect, equality, receptivity, and similarity expressed in VPC comforting messages, as these evaluations are specific evaluations of affiliative meaning (Burgoon & Hale, 1987; Dillard et al., 1999). In addition to assessing relational evaluations through the judgments of the relevancy of affiliation-disaffiliation and dominance-submissiveness frames (Dillard & Solomon, 2005), the various representations, or subcomponents, of affiliation may act in a similar fashion to H1. HPC comfort should be perceived as expressing greater affect, equality, receptivity, and similarity followed by MPC comfort, while LPC comfort should be perceived as expressing less affect, equality, receptivity, and similarity. Dominance is a less nuanced concept compared to affiliation (Dillard et al., 1999; Dillard et al., 1996) but subcomponents of dominance should also act in a similar fashion to H2, where LPC comfort is perceived as expressing more dominance compared to MPC comfort and HPC comfort which is perceived as expressing the least

dominance. The first research question acknowledges the potential similarity between relational frames and their corresponding subcomponents:

RQ1: Do all subcomponents of affiliation and dominance judgments vary as a function of VPC comfort, following the predictions of H1 and H2?

Changes in Relationship Quality

Variations in the quality of VPC comfort also should impact relational outcomes, capturing changes in perceptions of the quality of the relationship between the support provider and support recipient. One way to represent relationship quality is *relational satisfaction*, or positive affect felt in a relationship (Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b). The quality of emotional support offered in supportive interactions influences perceptions of relational satisfaction, where higher quality support is associated with increases in relational satisfaction (Afifi et al., 2013; Samter, 1994), resulting in the following hypothesis:

H3: Changes in satisfaction vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that HPC comfort generates more satisfaction followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort generates reduced satisfaction.

Satisfaction, however, represents only one way in which the quality of VPC comfort should influence outcomes representing relationship quality. Relationship quality also is characterized by concepts including intimacy, trust, closeness, and love (Fletcher et al., 2000). Evaluations of intimacy vary based on reports of uncertainty and open communication in romantic relationships (Theiss & Solomon, 2008). Furthermore, conceptualizations of relational qualities like intimacy and closeness are not completely isomorphic (Parks & Floyd, 1996). With the goal of identifying the relational effects of VPC comfort, the current study will include the relational outcome of satisfaction, as well as the additional relational outcomes of intimacy,

trust, closeness, commitment, liking, and loving (Dibble, Levine, & Park, 2012; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Rubin, 1973).

Variations in VPC comfort should produce a consistent pattern of effects on the relational outcomes of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust. While these relational outcomes represent distinct conceptualizations of relationship quality, higher quality relationships are perceived as *more* intimate, close, committed, and marked by *greater* trust, liking, and loving. For all representations of relationship quality, increases in perceived quality following communicative actions represent positive and desired outcomes, while decreases in perceived quality following communicative actions represent negative or undesired outcomes. LPC comfort, because of the expressions of condemnation, blame, and criticism, should negatively affect relational outcomes. After receiving LPC comfort, relational partners should report reduced closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust because LPC comfort does not acknowledge the experiences and feelings of an upset relational partner. MPC comfort should have a positive impact on relational outcomes. Even in non-feeling centered explanations and redirection attempts offered in MPC comfort, relational partners should report increases in closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust because a relational partner has acknowledged, albeit implicitly, their emotional distress. HPC comfort explicitly elaborates on feelings and emotions and helps a relational partner consider other perspectives; as such, HPC comfort should result in the greatest degree of positive change in perceptions of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, satisfaction, and trust. Changes in relational outcomes from HPC comfort should be greater than the changes from MPC comfort because of the explicit elaboration of the particular emotional experiences faced by the distressed relational partner.

The fourth hypothesis of the current study summarizes the above logic in a prediction regarding the relational outcomes of VPC comfort:

H4: Changes in relational outcomes vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that HPC comfort generates more positive evaluations of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort generates more negative evaluations of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust.

Processing and Evaluating Relational Effects

The dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes identifies the theoretical mechanisms through which supportive messages are processed, recognizing that VPC messages are processed at different levels of elaboration (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Bodie, Burleson, Holmstrom, et al., 2011; Burleson, 2009; Holmstrom et al., 2015). When people process supportive messages at high levels of elaboration, people carefully think about the full message, carefully attending to the full content of supportive messages. When processing supportive messages at relatively low levels of elaboration, people "pay comparatively little attention to the content of the message" (Bodie & Burleson, 2008, p. 363); instead message processing is guided by environmental cues or heuristics. Similar to how PCT guides predictions of the relational effects of VPC comfort, the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes identifies the salient contextual features which influence how people process supportive messages. In particular, the three features of stressor severity, the sex of the helper providing support, and the closeness of the relationship shared between support provider and support recipient are features identified in the dual-process theory which should account for variability in the relational effects of VPC comfort.

First, one salient situational factor for the processing of relational effects is the degree of emotional upset experienced. The degree of upset felt in a supportive situation impacts the processing of comforting messages with people experiencing moderate levels of stress exhibiting the greatest degree of elaboration; message effects should thus be most pronounced under conditions of moderate upset. As the logic goes, individuals experiencing low levels of stress are not as motivated to carefully attend to the content of supportive messages, while those experiencing very high levels of stress are not as able to elaborate on the content of supportive messages (Bodie, Burleson, Holmstrom, et al., 2011; Bodie et al., 2012). Thus, people experiencing very low (or very high) levels of upset may not as clearly discriminate between the relational effects of LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort compared to people experiencing only moderate degrees of upset, as receivers experiencing only moderate levels of upset can carefully attend to and process the relational implications of VPC comfort. The identification of the condition under which stressor severity should moderate the relational effects of VPC comfort is represented in the fifth hypothesis:

H5: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients facing a more upsetting stressor than recipients facing a mildly upsetting stressor.

A second factor likely to influence the processing of supportive messages and in turn impact the relational effects is the sex of the support provider. Burleson (2008) found that standard VPC comforting messages were evaluated more positively under conditions of mild stress when attributed to a female support provider than a male support provider. Furthermore, evaluations of the helpfulness of LPC comfort vary as a function of the sex of the support provider; LPC comfort from female support providers is evaluated as less supportive and

effective (Holmstrom, Burleson, & Jones, 2005). Low elaboration of VPC comfort may occur when heuristic cues about the type of relationship or sex of the support provider are accessible and available, and lower elaboration may result in less discrimination between the relational effects of VPC comfort. Support provider sex should moderate the relational effects of VPC comfort, where comfort from female support providers produces stronger relational effects but only for mildly upsetting stressors. When faced with more upsetting stressors, people will engage in more systematic processing, focusing more on the content of comforting messages compared to experiencing more mild stressors where people will rely on heuristic cues related to provider sex in processing and evaluating relational effects. The sixth hypothesis acknowledges the moderating effect of provider sex and stressor severity and is represented as:

H6: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients receiving support from female support providers than recipients receiving support from male support providers only when receivers experience mildly upsetting stressors.

Finally, the relationship status shared between support provider and support recipient may also serve as an environmental cue influencing the processing of VPC comfort. The dual-process theory proposes that recipients have a stored heuristic that directs processing of support under conditions of mild stress (e.g., "close partners provide good emotional support," as described in Holmstrom et al., 2015, p. 532). When standardized support messages are attributed to a friend with whom the support recipient shares a close relationship versus a classmate with whom the receiver shares a less close relationship, these messages are evaluated as more helpful and more comforting (R. A. Clark et al., 1998; Holmstrom et al., 2015).

Prior research has conceptualized closeness in the *type* of relationship, recognizing that the heuristic cues accessible and available are based on the classification of relationships as friendships versus acquaintances. These conceptualizations may extend to other types of relationships including romantic relationships, especially in young adults. As adolescents advance into young adulthood, friends and romantic partners are perceived as more close compared to family relationships because adolescents begin to develop peer relationships outside the family (Laursen & Williams, 1997). People develop implicit theories about romantic relationships (Knee & Boon, 2001), and these implicit theories may result in the development and accessibility of heuristic cues which influence evaluations of the quality of support from a romantic partner ("romantic partners provide quality support"). Similarly, people frequently recognize that the sharing of emotions is an expression of intimacy and closeness in same-and cross-sex friendships (Parks & Floyd, 1996). Conceptualizations of friendships as places where emotions are shared may result in the development and accessibility of similar heuristic cues which influence the evaluation of relational effects ("friends provide quality support").

For friendships and romantic relationships, these heuristic cues will impact processing when people are not as motivated to systematically process the content of supportive messages and, in turn, systematically consider instrumental and relational evaluations. Family relationships are still contexts where young adults perceive support is available (Pierce et al., 1991), but there may be fewer heuristic cues available for these relationships, suggesting relational effects, especially when mild upset, may not be as strong for this type of relationship. While family members are still likely to provide good quality support, the difference proposed in the sixth hypothesis recognizes that recipients likely do not have the same heuristic cues accessible and available for family members compared to friends and romantic partners. The

type of relationship shared with a support provider may influence the evaluation of the relational effects under mild stressors such that support from friends and romantic partners produces stronger effect on relational effects compared to family members because receivers are accessing heuristic cues and not systematically processing comforting messages. When facing more severe stressors, however, the type of relationship should not have as strong an effect on relational effects because receivers will be more motivated to critically evaluate the content of supportive message and, in turn, evaluate relational effects based on the content of support rather than relying on heuristic cues. The seventh hypothesis proposes that:

H7: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients receiving support from romantic partners and friends than recipients receiving support from family relationships, but only when receivers experience mildly upsetting stressors.

Summary of Study Goals

The predominant goal of the current study is to identify the relational effects of person-centered comforting, contributing to PCT (Jones & Bodie, 2014). Relational effects are identified to include evaluations of relational meaning as well as relational outcomes that change as a function of a quality of comforting message. For relational meaning, two hypotheses (H1 and H2) predict variations in the framing of VPC comforting quality based on the frames of affiliation and relational control developed in Relational Framing Theory, connecting PCT to a theory of relational communication processes (Dillard et al., 1996). Integrating perspectives of the various subcomponents of affiliation and relational control offered in relational communication (Burgoon & Hale, 1984), RQ1 explores if the predictions made in H1 and H2 hold for the subcomponents of relational communication (Dillard et al., 1999; Hale, Burgoon, &

Householder, 2005). For relational outcomes, six distinct characteristics representing relationship quality will be tested in H4, representing relational outcomes beyond relational satisfaction tested in H3 (Afifi et al., 2013).

A secondary goal is the testing of situational factors identified in the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes and how these outcomes may account for variance in the relational effects of VPC comfort. These hypotheses include situational factors of the stressful situation (H5), the sex of the support provider (H6), and the type of relationship (H7), specifying the moderating effect of stressor severity, support provider sex, and relationship type on the effects of VPC comforting for these situational factors. These hypotheses contribute to both PCT and the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes.

To ensure the goals of the current study are adequately conceptualized and operationalized, the current study employs the message perception paradigm (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). Within the message perception paradigm, the person-centered quality of comforting messages can be controlled, as well as the severity invoked by using realistic scenarios. VPC comfort will be attributed to a current relational partner, ensuring the relational effects are studied in the context of an extant relationship.

Method

Participants

Participants (N = 120) were students enrolled in introductory-level Communication Studies courses at Louisiana State University in the 2015-2016 academic year, spanning the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters. Participants were recruited using the Sona Systems® message board which lists all available research opportunities in the Department. Studies must be approved by the Institutional Review Board before in order to be visible on the Sona Systems®

message board (Copy of approval in Appendix A). In exchange for participating, participants received a small portion of class credit (3% of their course grade). The study was entitled "Conversations in Relationships," and participants were asked to read a description of the study prior to selecting an appointment time (See Appendix B).

The sample was composed of 59.20% female participants (n = 71) and 40.80% male participants (n = 49). Participants were aapproximately 19 years old (M = 19.97 years; Mdn = 20 years, $Mode$ = 19 years, SD = 2.10 years), but participants ranged in age from 18 to 33. Participants reported their ethnic identity by selecting all relevant categories. The majority of the sample identified as Caucasian (70.00% n = 84), though participants also identified as African-American or Black (22.50%, n = 27), Asian-American or Asian (6.70%, n = 8), Hispanic-American or Hispanic (7.50%, n = 9), Middle Eastern (2.50%, n = 3), and Native American (3.30%, n = 4). Two participants (2.10% of the sample) specified other ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Arabian). Participants represented all academic classifications: 23.30% were classified as Freshmen (n = 28), 38.80% were classified as Sophomores (n = 46), 20.00% were classified as Juniors (n = 24), 17.5% were classified as Seniors (n =21), and 1 was classified as a graduate student (0.8%). The majority of participants were affiliated with other academic programs (91.70%, n = 110); only 2.50% of participants were majors (n = 3), and 5.80% of participants were minors (n =7) within the Department of Communication Studies.

Procedures

Arriving at the computer lab for their assigned appointment time, participants were greeted by the researcher and asked to sign in. After signing in, participants were seated at one of five computer carrels. Each carrel was equipped with a desktop computer. Participants were given brief verbal instructions to work alone and follow the instructions in the online survey

hosted through Qualtrics®. The first screen of the online survey contained the informed consent language approved by the Institutional Review Board. After acknowledging the informed consent, participants provided demographic information and completed various individual difference measures before completing the measures related to their relational partner.

Participants were asked to identify a relational partner with whom they normally talk about their problems; this individual was the focus for the remainder of the computer survey. After providing descriptive information about their relational partner, participants were asked to rate their relationship on various measures. The measures, along with the items within the selected instrumentation, were presented in random order. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions (Experimental stimuli are provided in Appendix C). After exposure to the experimental stimuli, participants completed measures evaluating the conversation which were also presented in random order. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their participation and informed their research credits would be granted in 24-48 hours. Consent language and instrumentation are supplied in Appendix D.

Experimental Stimuli

The experimental stimuli were designed to mimic the conditions under which participants seek support for stressors and supportive conversations participants have about stressors. In particular, the six stimuli used here represent academic stressors common to college students. The scenarios and conversations were developed by Dr. Graham D. Bodie, Dr. Jessica Rack, Dr. Amanda Holmstrom, and the late Dr. Brant R. Burleson and are used with the permission of Dr. Graham D. Bodie. Because the stimuli were initially developed at Purdue University, I made one modification in scenarios 4-6 to feature the LSU online course management software of *Moodle*, removing the reference to *SSInfo*.

Participants were randomly assigned to a single condition through the Qualtrics® Survey Software. In setting up the Qualtrics® software, each condition was to be displayed 20 times, resulting in 20 participants in each of the six conditions. The six conditions varied (a) the severity of the stressor presenting either a mildly severe academic stressors (i.e., failing a quiz) or a more severe academic stressor (i.e., failing a class) and (b) the quality of VPC comfort attributed to the relational partner in response to the stressor (LPC, MPC, or HPC comfort). Results obtained by Bodie, Burleson, Gill-Rosier, et al. (2011) utilizing the condition and stressor manipulation revealed the moderately severe academic stressor resulted in higher ratings of upset compared to the mildly severe stressor (see Table 1, p. 237).

Measurement Model Validity

Measurement model validity was assessed with Confirmatory Factor Analysis for all scaled instruments, created and estimated in AMOS® 23, in conjunction with SPSS® 23. The following fit statistics were employed to evaluate model fit; brief definitions and how I employed these fit statistics to determine the appropriateness of model fit are based on Byrne (2010).

First, I examined and reported the model CFI, or comparative fit index, a goodness-of-fit statistic ranging from zero to 1.00, recognizing values above .90 represent especially well-fitting models (Hu & Bentler, 1999). I also examined and reported the model RMSEA, or the root mean square error of approximation. RMSEA estimates a parameter which represents the fit of the hypothesized model and the observed model based on estimations of population data. RMSEA values around .06 are suggested to represent good fit, but it is worth noting that RMSEA parameter estimates are sensitive to the observed sample size where RMSEA can "overreject true population models" (Byrne, 2010, p. 80). Following recommendations, I have included the confidence interval, where narrow confidence intervals suggest a more precise fit in

the population, accounting for sample size sensitivity (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996; Steiger, 1998). Furthermore, I also examined and included the standardized RMR (root mean residual), which represents the average value of standardized residuals. Standardized residuals account for discrepancies between the observed and hypothesized correlation matricies, derived from the fit of the variance-covariance matrix. Smaller values around .05 suggest a well-fitting model (Byrne, 2010).

For some models, I had to delete and remove items to improve model fit statistics. Decisions about the removal of items relied upon the standardized regression estimates; I focused on removing any items with regression estimates that were below .300, especially regression estimates with negative signs. I also examined critical ratios for differences between parameters, looking for patterns where parameters had multiple values above 1.96, suggesting the parameter did not fit with the other items in the model.

For scales created from more than one variable, I also estimated the reliability of sample data. When estimating and assessing reliability statistics, values greater than .70 were accepted but with values greater than .80 and closer to .90 preferred as these values suggest better internal fit or consistency of the data within the items (Nunnally, 1978). It is, however, important to note that I considered both reliability and the validity of measurement models. For some models, the further removal of items did not improve model fit or reliability estimates; in those cases, I retained the original structure suggested by the authors of the instrumentation and have noted potential concerns about the reliability and measurement model validity of these items.

Pre- Manipulation Measures

Relationship type. Participants were asked to select one label that best described how they know their selected partner. Relationship descriptions represented three general categories

including friends (27.50%, *n* = 33), romantic partners (51.70%, *n* = 62), and family members (20.80%, *n* = 20).

Participants provided further detail regarding the type of relationship they selected, refining the three general categories. Family partners included siblings (*n* = 7), mothers (*n* = 9), fathers (*n* = 3), cousins (*n* = 4), aunts (*n* = 1), and a grandmother (*n* = 1). Romantic partners included dating partners, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend (*n* = 58) as well as spouses, such as a husband or wife (*n* = 4). Within the friendships, 90.9% (*n* = 30) indicated their selected relational partner was their best friend. These descriptions were used to develop the three-level factor used in H6, as supportive messages were attributed to these relational partners.

Length of relationship. Participants were asked to select the category which best represented how long they had known their selected partner. The responses ranged from less than a year (6.70%), 1-2 years (16.70%), 2-3 years (11.70%), 3-4 years (8.30%), 4-5 years (19.20%), 5-10 years (15.00%), and more than ten years (22.50%). Additionally, participants were asked to estimate in months how long they had known their selected partner; these responses ranged from 1 month to 289 months (19 years) with a median response of 50 months, or 5 years (*M* = 76.73 months, *Mode* = 60 months, *SD* = 71.25 months, *n* = 8 missing). Participants reporting on a friendship reported being friends for an average of 4.6 years (*M* = 55.30 months, *SD* = 37.10 months, *Mode* = 60 months, *Mdn* = 60 months, Range 1-168 months). Participants reporting on a romantic relationship reported being in a romantic relationship with their partner for an average of 2.5 years (*M* = 30.39 months, *SD* = 24.92 months, *Mode* = 24 months, *Mdn* = 24 months, Range 2-120 months). These descriptive responses were not used in any analyses.

Sex of relational partner. Participants provided the sex of their partner (n = 1 missing). There were 42 same sex pairs, including 27 female pairs and 15 male pairs. There were 77 cross sex pairs, including 43 female participant/male partner pairs and 34 male participant/female partner pairs. As supportive messages were attributed to these partners, this variable was used in the analyses for H5.

Relationship quality characteristics. General relationship quality was measured using the Perceived Relationship Quality Components Inventory (PRCQ; Fletcher et al., 2000). The original instrument includes eighteen questions scaled along seven points (1 = not at all; 7 = extremely). The eighteen questions represent six dimensions including relationship satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, passion, and love. In the present analysis, 14 questions from the original PRCQ were used; the dimension of passion was excluded.[3] Three questions representing liking were added to the original PRCQ.

A model with perceived relationship quality as a second-order factor and the dimensions of satisfaction, commitment, intimacy, trust, and love as first-order factors was tested, based on the model originally estimated in Fletcher et al. (2000). Prior to CFA analyses, three missing values (0.14% of the 2040 values) were replaced with the series mean. Model fit was acceptable, $\chi 2$ (72, N = 120) = 155.47, p < .001, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .10 (.08, .12), SRMR = .07. When liking was included as a distinct first order factor, model fit decreased, $\chi 2$ (113, N = 120) = 389.11, p < .001, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .14 (.13, .16), SRMR = .10. After removing one problematic item from liking ("How attracted are you to your partner?") and one problematic item from intimacy ("How intimate is your relationship?"), model fit improved, $\chi 2$ (84, N = 120) = 198.36, p < .001, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .11 (.09, .13), SRMR = .07. Reliability estimates were appropriate for the other measures of relational quality including liking (α = .73, 2 items), loving

[3] One item representing love ("how much do you cherish your partner?") was accidentally excluded.

(α = .60, 2 items[4]), relational satisfaction (α = .95, 3 items), commitment (α = .84, 3 items), intimacy (α = .84, 2 items), and trust (α = .88, 3 items).

Closeness. Closeness was measured using the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS; Dibble et al., 2012). The URCS comprises twelve statements measured on a seven-point Likert scale (e.g., "my relationship with _____ is close"). Four missing values out of a possible 1440 values (0.27% of the total values) were replaced with the series mean prior to testing the unidimensional measurement model. The initial unidimensional model tested was overall adequate, $\chi 2$ (54, N = 120) = 228.20, $p < .001$, CFI = .85, RMSEA = .16 (.14; .19), SRMR = .07. The scale reliability of all 12 items was acceptable, α = .94.[5]

Post-Manipulation Measures

Relational frame judgments. During the post-manipulations evaluations of the supportive conversation, participants evaluated the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame and the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, representing the dependent variables analyzed in H1 and H2. Following procedures identified by Dillard and Solomon (2005), participants were presented with an extended example to explain dimensions and how relevance judgments are made for different objects of analysis. The example introduced physical objects (i.e., wax paper, sand paper) and presented dimensions relevant to the perception of tactile surfaces (i.e., hard/soft, rough/smooth; see Hollins, Faldowski, Rao, & Young, 1993) in order to illustrate how relevancy judgements are made. After reading the example, participants were asked to rate the

[4] Low reliability estimates on the loving subscale appears to be due to the type of relationship participants reported on: There was no internal consistency in family relationships (α = .05), friends (α = .15), but estimates were appropriate for romantic partners (α = .91).

[5] The eleventh scale item had the lowest standardized regression estimate (.61) and six critical ratios for differences between parameters above 1.96 ("When we are apart, I miss ____ a great deal"). Measurement model validity and reliability estimates were generated without item 3, resulting in no substantive change to reliability estimates (α = .92) and only marginal improvements in model fit, $\chi 2$ (44, N = 120) = 264.51, $p < .001$, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .16 (.14; .19), SRMR = .07. The adjusted model increased CFI fit by only .02 and did not improve RMSEA or SRMR estimates. The eleventh item was retained in subsequent analyses.

relevancy of dimensions for the experimental stimuli. Participants were presented with a series of twelve word pairs representing the two dimensions of affiliation-dominance and dominance-submission. The word pairs for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame included attraction/aversion, affection/disaffection, caring/indifference, friendly/unfriendly, liking/disliking, and positive regard/negative regard. The word pairs for the dominance-submission frame included coaxing/giving in, controlling/yielding, demanding/relenting, dominance/submission, influence/comply, and persuade/concede. Eight word pairs were developed by Dillard et al. (1996); four word pairs (caring/indifference, friendly/unfriendly, coaxing/giving in, demanding/relenting) were developed by Lannutti and Monahan (2002). All word pairs were presented along with a five point relevancy scale (1 = completely irrelevant; 5 = completely relevant).

Seven missing values (0.49% of the total possible 1440 values) were replaced with the mean prior to confirmatory factor analysis. A two-factor model with the two frames as correlated latent factors revealed poor fit, $\chi 2$ (53, N = 120) = 171.99, p < .001, CFI = .68, RMSEA = .14 (.12, .16), SRMR = .12. Two items from the affiliation-disaffiliation frame had factor loadings below .300 (attraction/aversion, b = -.02; liking/disliking, b = .11), and over a dozen critical ratios of difference above 1.96 (attraction/aversion = 20; liking/disliking = 14). Two items from the dominance-submission frame had a low factor loadings (influence/comply, b = .39; persuade/concede, b = .36) and critical ratios of difference were above 1.96 (influence/comply =10, persuade/concede = 11). Model fit improved after deleting these four items, $\chi 2$ (19, N = 120) = 39.34, p < .001, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .10 (.05, .14), SRMR = .06. Two subscales were created, and reliability estimates were generated for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (α = .74, 4 items) and the dominance-submissiveness frame (α = .75, 4

items). Dimensionality of the 12 relational judgement items was assessed by using principal axis factor analysis with varimax rotation; these results suggested a three-factor solution with the removed affiliation items loading on the third factor that did not mirror any prior factor analyses.[6] The two-factor solution was retained based on the strength of the correlated measurement model.

Relational communication scale. Items assessing themes of relational communication were assessed following the experimental manipulation. These items were used to create the dependent variables in RQ1. Items were selected from Burgoon and Hale (1987) and Dillard et al. (1999).[7] All items were measured using seven-point Likert scaling. Six items were reverse coded before analysis.

Measurement model validity was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis in addition to generating the item subscales. Eight values (0.25%) were missing out of the total 3120 possible values; these values were replaced with the mean prior to confirmatory factor analysis. First, two initial measurement models were tested. The first measurement model was derived from Burgoon and Hale (1987) and comprises 20 items loading on the five correlated latent factors of equality, intimacy I, intimacy II, intimacy III, and dominance (Graham, 1994; Hale et al., 2005). The initial model fit was acceptable, $\chi 2$ (160, N = 120) = 426.17, $p < .001$, CFI = .82, RMSEA = .12 (.11, .13), SRMR = 09. The second measurement model was derived from

[6] A principal factors analysis with varimax rotation was performed to replicate the methods of Dillard et al. (1996), Solomon et al. (2002), and McLaren et al. (2014). The first factor accounted for 20.92% of the variance and featured four items for the affiliation frame. The second factor accounted for 18.89% of the variance and included the six dominance frame items. The third factor accounted for 18.83% of the variance and included the two items from affiliation which were deleted in the CFA analyses (liking/disliking, attraction/aversion).

[7] The original scale includes items representing the factors of composure (e.g., "My partner felt very relaxed talking to me," "My partner was calm and poised with me") and formality (e.g., "My partner made the interaction very formal"). I excluded these items because of these items seem more appropriate for face to face interactions where verbal and nonverbal cues influence judgments of relational meaning. With experimental materials and conversations, the inclusion of these items did not seem accurate for the study design. If these procedures are replicated with face to face interactions, then these items should certainly be included.

Dillard et al. (1999) and comprises 26 items (20 duplicate items, 6 new items) loading on the seven correlated latent factors of immediacy, receptivity, affect, similarity, dominance, equality, and involvement. The initial model fit was slightly better than the first measurement model, $\chi 2$ (278, N = 120) = 720.91, $p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .09 (.08, .10), SRMR = 08. The second model from Dillard et al. (1999) served as the basis for further analyses. Three items had low factor items and multiple critical ratios above 1.96 ("_____ tried to persuade me"; "____ did not attempt to influence me" a reverse coded item; "____ was not attracted to me" a reverse coded item); once these items were removed model fit improved, $\chi 2$ (209, N = 240) = 396.81, $p < .001$, CFI = .91, RMSEA = .09 (.07, .10), SRMR = 07. Subscales were created and reliability estimates generated for immediacy (α = .90, 3 items), receptivity (α = .88, 4 items), affect (α = .84, 4 items), similarity (α = .87, 5 items), dominance (α = .69, 2 items), equality (α = .82, 2 items), and involvement (α = .80, 3 items).

Relationship outcomes. Changes in perceived relationship quality served as the dependent variables in the analysis of H3. Seven items were included to measure changes in relationship quality following the conversation including closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, trust, and satisfaction. Question scaling was derived from the Iowa Communication Record (Duck et al., 1991), where change was measured on a seven-point scale representing negative changes (-3, -2, -1), neutral/no change (0), and positive changes (+1, +2, +3). Questions were presented on a slider scale and the default position was neutral/no change (0).

When descriptive data were analyzed, I found 414 missing values, or 34.50% of the total 1,200 possible response values. The missing values were attributed to the question design selected in the Qualtrics® Survey software. If participants viewed but did not change the slider

position, no value was recorded, resulting in missing data.[8] Because the questions were defaulted to a neutral/no change position (0), I have presumed that participants who did not adjust their questions did not experience any change in relational quality for those measures. I created new variables with all missing values replaced with zeros, and I compared these values to the original variables using t-tests and checks for equal variance. The variable measuring *changes in loving* was the only case where the difference approached significance, t (125.83) = -1.80, p = .07. Any analyses of the relational *change in loving* were performed with both variables. Table 3.1 presents the comparison between the original and modified variables, including measures of central tendency, dispersion, and t-test statistics.

Table 3.1: Comparison of Relationship Change Variables, With and Without Missing Values

Variable name	Number of Missing Values	Original descriptive characteristics (M, SD)	Revised descriptive characteristics (M, SD)	*t*	*df*	*p*
Closeness	25	0.379 (1.467)	0.300 (1.313)	0.42	213	.68
Commitment	45	0.627 (1.459)	0.392 (1.190)	1.17	133.95[A]	.24
Intimacy	42	0.167 (1.507)	0.108 (1.215)	0.28	139.66[B]	.78
Liking	42	0.718 (1.537)	0.467 (1.283)	1.19	143.53[C]	.23
Loving	49	0.957(1.544)	0.567 (1.275)[*]	1.80	125.83[D]	.07
Satisfaction	19	0.455(1.609)	0.383 (1.485)	0.34	219	.73
Trust	40	0.825 (1.403)	0.550 (1.208)	1.477	198	.14

Notes. [A] Unequal variance, F = 1.50, p = .02. [B] Unequal variance, F = 1.53,p = .02. [C] Unequal variance, F = 1.43, p = .04. [D] Unequal variance, F = 1.46, p = .03.

[8] "Regardless of starting position, participants will need to move the slider bar slightly for the question to count as answered as opposed to skipped," *Qualtrics Question Types Guide: Slider* (http://www.qualtrics.com/university/researchsuite/basic-building/editing-questions/question-types-guide/slider/)

While each item was developed as an individual measure, reliability and measurement models were also assessed to determine if the seven relationship quality items could form a single measure of relationship change similar to the PRCQ. A fit of a single factor latent model was acceptable, $\chi 2$ (14, N = 240) = 74.83, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .14 (.11, .17), SRMR = 04. Reliability was estimated at $\alpha = .90$, suggesting high internal consistency among scaled values.

Conversation normality. The experimental stimuli feature researcher-written conversations featuring standardized supportive messages. Participants were asked to rate the normality of these scenarios in order to support the realism of the messages situated in these conversations. Three items were used to measure perceived normality of the conversation. All items were measured using five-point semantic differential scaling. The first item represented the normality of the conversations with anchor points of weird and normal; values ranged from 1 to 5 with a median of 4.00 (*M* = 3.48, *SD* = 1.36, *Mode* = 5). The second item represented the realism of the conversation with anchor points of unrealistic and realistic;
values ranged from 1 to 5 with a median of 4.00 (*M* = 3.73, *SD* = 1.34, *Mode* = 5). The third item represented the naturalness of the conversation with anchor points of unnatural and natural; values ranged from 1 to 5 with a median of 4.00 (*M* = 3.55, *SD* = 1.37, *Mode* = 5). Items were randomized among the semantic differential items measuring the message effects of helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2000).

Table 3.2 summarizes all relevant relationship variables, including the PRCQ measures collected pre-manipulation, along with the post-manipulation measures of relational framing (H1-H2), relational communication (RQ1), and relational outcomes (H3-H4). Additionally, I summarize descriptive information about the subscale(s) and measure(s) in the table.

Table 3.2: Descriptive Statistics Summary for Study 1 Variables

Variable	*N*	Example Item	*M (SD)*	Range	Skew.	Kurt.	α
		Pre-Manipulation Variables					
Closeness (URCS)	11	"My relationship with ____ is close."	5.92 (1.07)	1.08 – 7.00	-1.71	3.62	.94
Commitment (PRQ)	3	"How committed are you to your relationship?"	5.88 (1.39)	1.33 – 7.00	-1.50	1.71	.84
Intimacy(PRQ)	2	"How connected are you to your partner?"	6.13 (1.08)	1.00 – 7.00	-1.75	3.93	.84
Liking	2	"How much do you like your partner?"	6.13 (1.09)	1.00 – 7.00	-1.92	4.58	.73
Loving(PRQ)	2	"How much do you love your partner?"	6.01 (1.22)	1.00 – 7.00	-1.48	2.28	.60
Satisfaction (PRQ)	3	"How satisfied are you with your relationship?"	5.66 (1.35)	1.50 – 7.00	-1.73	3.03	.95
Trust (PRQ)	3	"How much do you trust your partner?"	5.91 (1.26)	1.50 – 7.00	-1.54	2.32	.88
		Post-Manipulation Dependent Variables					
Affiliation (H1)	4	"Liking/Disliking"	4.15 (0.77)	1.00 – 5.00	-1.16	1.75	.75
Dominance (H2)	4	"Dominance/Submission"	2.47 (0.96)	1.00 – 5.00	0.21	-0.61	.74
Affect (RQ1)	4	"____ was interested in talking to me"	4.95 (1.59)	1.50 – 7.00	-0.39	-1.06	.84
Immediacy (RQ1)	3	"____ was intensely involved in the conversation"	4.52 (1.66)	1.00 – 7.00	-0.42	-0.83	.90
Involvement (RQ1)	3	"How involved or uninvolved was your partner?"	4.84 (1.35)	2.00 – 7.00	-0.15	0.72	.80
Equality (RQ1)	2	"____ considered us equals."	5.07 (1.73)	1.00 – 7.00	-0.61	-0.58	.82
Receptivity (RQ1)	4	"____ was very honest in communicating with me"	5.17 (1.55)	1.00 – 7.00	-0.62	-0.59	.88
Similarity (RQ1)	5	"____ seemed to act like we were very good friends"	4.28 (1.57)	1.00 – 7.00	-0.30	-0.82	.87
Dominance (RQ1)	2	"____ tried to dominate me"	3.18 (1.63)	1.00 – 7.00	-0.65	0.44	.69
Closeness (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in how close you are to ___"	0.30 (1.31)	-2.00 – 3.00	0.38	-0.48	--
Commitment (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in how committed you are to ___"	0.39 (1.19)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.54	0.55	--
Intimacy (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in your intimacy with ___"	0.11 (1.22)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.02	0.99	--
Liking (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in how much you like ___"	0.47 (1.28)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.35	-0.18	--
Loving (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in how much you love ___"	0.57 (1.28)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.39	0.38	--
Satisfaction (H4)	1	"…Resulted in a change in your satisfaction in your relationship with ___"	0.38 (1.49)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.13	-0.60	--
Trust (H3)	1	"…Resulted in a change in how much you trust ___"	0.55(1.21)	-3.00 – 3.00	0.20	0.10	--

Results

With $N = 120$ and α set at .05, the power to detect significant zero-order correlations is .29 for small effects ($r = .10$), .96 for medium effects ($r = .30$), and in excess of .99 for large effects ($r = .50$). The power to detect significant differences between LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort in direct comparisons of equal group sizes ($n = 40$) is .22 for small effects ($d = .20$), .71 for medium effects ($d = .50$), and .97 for large effects ($d = .80$). Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) was used in post-hoc comparisons to identify differences between LPC comfort, MPC comfort, and HPC comfort.

For the full factorial 3 (VPC quality, LPC, MPC, HPC) x 2 (Stressor Severity, low or high) x 2 (Support Provider Sex, male or female) x 3 (Relationship Type, family, friend, or romantic partner) model accounting all main effects, two-way interaction effects, and three-way interaction effects, power is .06 for small effects ($f = .10$), .19 for medium effects ($f = .25$), and .54 for large effects ($f = .40$).

The results for H1 – H7 and RQ1 were analyzed in one-way ANOVAs utilizing polynomial trend analyses with VPC comforting quality as the independent grouping variable and the relevant dependent variables. Additionally, the effect of VPC comforting quality on the dependent variables were also estimated in a full factorial model with the main and interaction effects for the relevant variables predicted in H5 – H7. The text reports the effects from the full factorial ANOVA for H1-H4 because main effects for VPC comfort were statistically supported in both the individual one-way ANOVAs and the full factorial models for all dependent variables. I am able to provide SPSS syntax and SPSS output for the full results of all models estimated upon request. Figures visually representing the linear effect of VPC comfort on all dependent variables are provided in Appendix E.

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to the analyses for the seven hypotheses and one research question, the normality of the comforting scenarios were assessed with a one-way ANOVA with the three levels of VPC comforting quality serving as the independent variable and the three normality measures analyzed as separate dependent variables. For one-way ANOVA models featuring VPC comfort as the independent variable, power is .10 for small effects (f = .10), .51 for medium effects (f = .25), and .93 for large effects (f = .40).

Ratings of normality differed by VPC condition, F (2, 117) = 14.97, p < .001, η^2 = .20, with HPC comfort (M = 4.00, SD = 1.36) rated as more normal (p < .001, d =1.07, r^2 = .22) than LPC comfort (M = 2.63, SD = 1.19) and MPC comfort (M = 3.83, SD = 1.11) rated as more normal (p < .001, d =1.04, r = .21) than LPC comfort. MPC comfort did not differ in ratings of normality (p = .52) from HPC comfort. Across the three comforting scenarios, ratings of normality were higher for HPC comfort compared to LPC comfort.

Ratings of realism differed by VPC condition, F (2, 117) = 5.09, p = .008, η^2 = .08, with HPC comfort (M = 4.08, SD = 1.23) rated as more realistic (p = .003, d = .14, r^2 = .01) than LPC comfort (M = 3.20, SD = 1.40). MPC comfort (M = 3.90, SD = 1.26) was rated as more realistic (p = .017, d = .53, r^2 = .06) compared to LPC comfort. MPC comfort did not differ in ratings of realism (p= .54) from HPC comfort. Across the three comforting scenarios, ratings of realism were higher for HPC comfort compared to LPC comfort.

Ratings of naturalism differed by VPC condition, F (2, 117) = 20.57, p < .001, η^2 = .26, with HPC conversations (M = 4.25, SD = 1.03) rated as more natural (p < .001, d = 1.33, r^2 = .31) than LPC comfort (M = 2.60, SD = 1.41), and MPC comfort (M = 3.80, SD = 1.09) rated as more natural (p <.001, d =.95, r^2 =.24) than LPC comfort. HPC comfort did not differ on ratings

of naturalism (p = .09) from MPC comfort. Across the three comforting scenarios, ratings of naturalism were higher for HPC comfort compared to LPC comfort. These preliminary results suggest the HPC and MPC comforting scenarios are evaluated as more normal, natural, and realistic compared to LPC comforting scenarios.

Preliminary analyses of naturalism, normality, and realism were also conducted for the type of relationship attributed to the support provider in the comforting scenarios. In these analyses, the three dominant relationship types (family, friends, and romantic partners) served as the independent variables in a one-way ANOVA with the normality measures analyzed as separate dependent variables. Ratings of normality did not differ based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider, F (2, 117) = 1.10, p = .34. Ratings of realism did not differ based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider, F (2, 117) = 1.06, p = .35. Ratings of naturalism did not differ based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider, F (2, 237) = 0.43, p = .65. There were no statistically significant differences in the post-hoc comparisons. The preliminary results suggest normality ratings do not vary based on the conversational partner selected for the study.

Preliminary analyses were also conducted comparing ratings of extant relationship closeness by the type of relationship shared with the support provider. Ratings of closeness, measured with the URCS (Dibble et al., 2012), did not differ based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider, F (2, 117) = 1.93, p = .15. There were no statistically significant differences in the post-hoc comparisons of extant closeness. The median closeness rating was 6.25 on a 7.00 scale, suggesting all partners received high ratings of closeness, further supporting the use of conceptual *types* of relationships (versus closeness) for H6.

Preliminary analyses compared judgments of affiliative framing and judgments of dominance framing. All comforting scenarios received higher ratings of affiliation framing relevancy (M = 4.15, SD = .77) compared to dominance framing relevancy (M = 2.75, SD = .96), t (238) = 14.95, $p < .001$, d = 1.93, r^2 = .48.

Bivariate correlations were estimated between pre-manipulation evaluations of relational quality and post-manipulation changes in relational quality. Pre-manipulation evaluations were strongly associated with other pre-manipulation evaluations; the same pattern emerged in post-manipulation evaluations. Only four of the possible 49 bivariate correlation coefficients comparing pre- and post-manipulations were statistically significant. Post-manipulation changes in loving were positively correlated with pre-manipulation evaluations of closeness, commitment, and intimacy. Pre-manipulation and post-manipulation ratings of commitment were positively correlated. Important for the theoretical logic in H4 and the forthcoming analyses, pre- and post- manipulation evaluations of closeness were positively associated but the association was not statistically supported. Taken as a whole, only the relational outcomes of commitment and loving were associated with pre-manipulation measures of relationship quality.

H1: VPC and Affiliative Framing

H1 predicted judgments of affiliative framing would differ based on the quality of VPC comfort. H1 was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117)= 3.17, p = .047, partial η^2 = .05, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p = .02), with HPC comfort judged as more affiliative than LPC comfort and MPC comfort judged as more affiliative than LPC comfort. While HPC comfort was judged as more affiliative than MPC comfort, the difference was not statistically supported (p = .43). Table 3.4 presents the descriptive information and effects for VPC comforting quality and relational evaluations tested in H1, H2, and RQ1. Appendix E presents figures graphically displaying the effect of VPC comfort on relational evaluations.

Table 3.3: Correlation Table, Pre-Manipulation and Post-Manipulation Relationship Quality

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Pre: Closeness	--													
2. Pre: Commitment	.80***	--												
3. Pre: Intimacy	.82***	.74***	--											
4. Pre: Liking	.72***	.70***	.69***	--										
5. Pre: Loving	.71***	.64***	.64***	.77***	--									
6. Pre: Trust	.60***	.55***	.73***	.52***	.45***	--								
7. Pre: Satisfaction	.65***	.63***	.74***	.62***	.53***	.76***	--							
8. Post: Closeness	.11	.12	.07	-.01	.04	.09	.06	--						
9. Post: Commitment	.06	.19***	.05	.04	.03	.02	.06	.67***	--					
10. Post: Intimacy	.10	.14	.06	.12	.06	.07	-.02	.65***	.64***	--				
11. Post: Liking	.02	.15	.07	.04	.00	.05	.02	.73***	.77***	.66***	--			
12. Post: Loving	.23*	.27**	.18*	.15	.13	.15	.13	.72***	.79***	.64***	.76***	--		
13. Post: Trust	.05	.11	.07	-.05	-.07	.16	.10	.70***	.71***	.53***	.72***	.74***	--	
14. Post: Satisfaction	.12	.16	.09	.00	.06	.11	.07	.73***	.63***	.60***	.76***	.71***	.71***	--

Notes. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

H2: VPC and Dominance Framing

H2 predicted judgments of dominance framing would differ based on the quality of VPC comfort. H2 was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 3.93, p = .023, partial η^2 = .05, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with LPC comfort judged as more dominant than MPC comfort and HPC comfort. While HPC comfort was judged as less dominant than MPC comfort, the difference was not statistically supported (p = .17).

RQ1: VPC and Affiliation and Dominance Subcomponents

RQ1 recognized the subcomponents of relational meaning should differ based on the quality of VPC comfort, following the linear trends predicted in H1 for affiliation and H2 for dominance. In total, seven dependent variables were analyzed as part of RQ1. Affiliation was represented by six of the dependent variables, including *affect*, *immediacy*, *involvement*, *equality*, *receptivity*, and *sensitivity*. Dominance was only represented by a single dependent variable.

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *affect* was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 19.82, p < .001, partial η^2 = .23, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more affect than MPC comfort and LPC comfort; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *immediacy* was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 10.79, p < .001, partial η^2 = .15, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more immediacy than MPC comfort and HPC comfort expressing more immediacy than LPC comfort. While the difference between MPC comfort and LPC comfort on ratings of immediacy was in the predicted direction, the difference was not statistically supported (p = .15).

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *involvement* was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 4.88, p = .01, partial η^2 = .08, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC

comfort (p = .004), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more involvement than MPC comfort and LPC comfort. While the difference between MPC comfort and LPC comfort on ratings of involvement was in the predicted direction, the difference was not statistically supported (p = .12).

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *equality* was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 14.88, p < .001, partial η^2 = .19, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more equality than MPC comfort and LPC comfort; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *receptivity* was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 10.12, p < .001, partial η^2 = .15, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more receptivity than MPC comfort and LPC comfort; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

The effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of *similarity* was supported by a main omnibus effect, F (2, 117) = 24.21, p < .001, partial η^2 = .26, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort evaluated as expressing more similarity than MPC comfort and LPC comfort; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

The results suggest the subcomponents of affiliative meaning explored in RQ1 follow the same trend predicted in H1. Similar to the results of H1, the linear trend was significant where HPC comfort was evaluated as more affiliative than LPC comfort. However, evaluations of MPC comfort were not consistently differentiated from LPC comfort and HPC comfort.

The one subcomponent of *dominance* revealed the effect of VPC comforting quality on ratings of dominance was supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 24.21, p < .001, partial η^2 =

.26, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort ($p < .001$), with LPC comfort evaluated as expressing more dominance than MPC comfort and HPC comfort; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted. However, the quadratic polynomial contrast was also significant for ratings of dominance ($p = .008$). One reason may be the substantial drop from LPC comfort to MPC and HPC comfort. Appendix E presents figures visually displaying the differences between LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort for all hypotheses tested. Table 3.4 summarizes the differences between LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort for all variables investigated in H1, H2, and RQ1 by presenting the descriptive statistics and the effect size for each variable.

Table 3.4: Summary of Differences in VPC Comforting Quality and Relational Meaning

	VPC Comforting Quality			
Dependent Variables	LPC Comfort *M (SD)*	MPC Comfort *M (SD)*	HPC Comfort *M (SD)*	Partial η^2
Affiliation Framing (H1)	3.91 (0.92) $_{B, C}$	4.21 (0.62) $_{A}$	4.34 (0.69) $_{A}$	.05***
Dominance Framing (H2)	2.94 (0.77) $_{B, C}$	2.37 (0.97) $_{A}$	2.11 (0.95) $_{A}$	.05***
Affect (RQ1)	3.65 (1.28) $_{B, C}$	5.29 (1.36) $_{A, C}$	5.91 (1.22) $_{A, B}$	.23***
Immediacy (RQ1)	3.80 (1.63) $_{C}$	4.32 (1.56) $_{C}$	5.45 (1.35) $_{A,B}$	.15***
Involvement (RQ1)	4.32 (1.31) $_{C}$	4.77 (1.26) $_{C}$	5.42 (1.27) $_{A, B}$	.08**
Equality (RQ1)	3.70 (1.69) $_{B, C}$	5.40 (1.42) $_{A, C}$	6.11 (1.07) $_{A, B}$	.19***
Receptivity (RQ1)	4.29 (1.44) $_{B, C}$	5.18 (1.46) $_{A, C}$	6.05 (1.23) $_{A, B}$	.15***
Similarity (RQ1)	3.12 (1.43) $_{B, C}$	4.28 (1.21) $_{A, C}$	5.44 (1.12) $_{A, B}$	.26***
Dominance (RQ1)	4.56 (1.37) $_{B, C}$	2.64 (1.28) $_{A}$	2.32 (1.25) $_{A}$	.26***

Notes: $_{A}$ denotes difference from LPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{B}$ denotes difference from MPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{C}$ denotes difference from HPC comfort at $p < .05$. *** Linear effect significant at $p < .001$, ** Linear effect significant at $p < .01$, * Linear effect significant at $p < .05$.

H3: VPC and Satisfaction

H3 predicted the outcome of relationship satisfaction would change based on the quality of VPC comfort. Changes in *satisfaction* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 19.56, p < .001, partial η^2 = .23, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), with HPC comfort producing greater positive changes in satisfaction than MPC comfort and LPC comfort producing negative changes in satisfaction; differences between all three forms of VPC comfort on changes in satisfaction were significant, in support of H3. Table 3.5 presents the descriptive information and effects for VPC comforting quality and relational outcomes tested in H3 and H4. Appendix E presents figures graphically displaying the effect of VPC comfort on relational outcomes.

H4: VPC and Relational Outcomes

H4 predicted the relational outcomes of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust would change based on the quality of VPC comfort. .Each outcome variable is presented separately, with descriptive information and linear effects summarized in Table 3.5.

Changes in *closeness* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 4.07, p = .047, partial η^2 = .15, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p < .001), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in closeness than MPC comfort and LPC comfort produced negative changes in closeness. While both MPC and HPC comfort resulted in positive changes in closeness, the difference between MPC comfort and HPC comfort on changes in closeness was not supported (p = .12).

Changes in *commitment* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 6.13, p = .003, partial η^2 = .09, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort (p = .002), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in commitment than MPC comfort and LPC comfort produced negative changes in commitment. While both MPC and HPC comfort resulted in

positive changes in commitment, the difference between MPC comfort and HPC comfort on changes in commitment was not supported statistically ($p = .07$).

Changes in *intimacy* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 12.71, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort ($p < .001$), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in intimacy than MPC comfort and LPC comfort produced negative changes in intimacy; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

Changes in *liking* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117) = 12.87, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort ($p < .001$), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in liking than MPC comfort and LPC comfort produced negative changes in liking; LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort statistically differed as predicted.

Changes in *loving* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 117)= 7.88, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort ($p < .001$), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in loving than MPC comfort and LPC comfort produced negative changes in loving. While LPC comfort resulted in negative changes in loving and HPC comfort resulted in positive changes in loving as predicted, the difference between LPC comfort and MPC comfort on changes in commitment was not supported ($p = .052$).[9]

Changes in *trust* were supported by a main effect, F (2, 87) = 4.44, $p = .015$, partial $\eta^2 = .07$, that revealed a linear trend in ratings of VPC comfort ($p = .006$), where HPC comfort produced greater positive changes in satisfaction than MPC comfort and LPC comfort. Notably, LPC comfort did not produce negative changes in trust ($M = 0.05$, $SD = 1.20$) in contrast with predictions. Differences between HPC comfort and MPC comfort were not supported ($p = .25$).

[9] Recalling that the modified love variable differed from the original variable with missing values, I also ran these tests on the original variable. The results support H3; VPC comfort produced a significant effect, F (2, 41) = 5.04, $p = .011$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$ and a linear effect ($p = .002$), with HPC producing greater positive changes in loving than MPC comfort and LPC comfort producing negative changes. In the analyses on the modified variable, the difference between MPC and HPC comfort was not supported, mirroring the results in the main text.

In general, the results of the six relational outcome measures generally support H3. The linear effect was significant for all seven variables. However, MPC comfort was not clearly differentiated for changes in closeness and satisfaction. LPC produced negative changes in six of the seven dependent variables, with the exception being changes in trust.

Table 3.5: Summary of Differences in VPC Comforting Quality and Relational Outcomes

	VPC Comforting Quality			
Dependent Variables	LPC Comfort *M* (*SD*)	MPC Comfort *M* (*SD*)	HPC Comfort *M* (*SD*)	Partial η^2
Satisfaction (H3)	-0.68 (1.31) $_{B, C}$	0.50 (1.13) $_{A, C}$	1.32 (1.28) $_{A, B}$	.23***
Closeness (H4)	-0.50 (1.13) $_{B, C}$	0.50 (1.24) $_{A}$	0.90 (1.17) $_{A}$	.15*
Commitment (H4)	-0.13 (1.04) $_{C}$	0.40 (1.06) $_{C}$	0.90 (1.26) $_{A, B}$	.09**
Intimacy (H4)	-0.73 (1.08) $_{B, C}$	0.28 (1.04) $_{A, C}$	0.78 (1.02) $_{A, B}$	.17***
Liking (H4)	-0.38 (1.13) $_{B, C}$	0.58 (0.96) $_{A, C}$	1.20 (1.24) $_{A, B}$	.17***
Loving (H4)	-0.03 (1.07) $_{C}$	0.55 (1.15) $_{C}$	1.18 (1.31) $_{A, B}$	.12***
Trust (H4)	0.05 (1.20) $_{B, C}$	0.65 (1.19) $_{A}$	0.95 (1.08) $_{A}$	.07*

Notes: $_{A}$ denotes difference from LPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{B}$ denotes difference from MPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{C}$ denotes difference from HPC comfort at $p < .05$. *** Linear effect significant at $p < .001$, ** Linear effect significant at $p < .01$, * Linear effect significant at $p < .05$.

H5: Stressor Severity Moderates Relational Effects

H5 predicted the linear effects of VPC comfort on relational effects would be stronger for more severe stressors compared to less severe stressors. For H5, all dependent variables measuring relational effects were tested, which included relational frames, relational meaning subcomponents, and changes in relationship quality.

Stressor severity and VPC comforting quality from the full factorial ANOVA model did not produce a significant interaction effect on the relational effects of affiliation framing

judgments (p = .08), or the dominance framing judgements (p = .10). Additionally, stressor severity and VPC comforting quality did not produce a significant interaction effect on the affiliation meaning subcomponents of affect (p = .40), immediacy (p = .73), involvement (p = .76), equality (p = .27), receptivity (p = .86), and similarity (p = .99); nor was there a significant interaction effect for stressor severity and VPC comforting quality on the subcomponent of dominance (p = .56). Furthermore, stressor severity and VPC comforting quality did not produce a significant interaction effect on the relational outcomes of closeness (p = .41), commitment (p = .32), intimacy (p = .40), liking (p = .55), loving (p = .35), satisfaction (p = .28), or trust (p = .38). Furthermore, stressor severity did not produce a main effect on any relational effects. In these analyses, H2 was not supported.

Secondary Analyses of H2. The results were replicated in a 3 (VPC Quality) x 2 (Stressor Severity) Factorial ANOVA because of considerations that the sample was underpowered to detect medium and large effects in the full design. For the 3 (VPC Quality) x 2 (Stressor Severity) factorial ANOVA including main and interaction effects, power is .10 for small effects (f = .10), .51 for medium effects (f = .25), and .93 for large effects (f = .93).

In the secondary analyses, severity produced a *main effect* on four variables in the 3 (VPC Quality) x 2 (Stressor Severity) Factorial ANOVA. No other relational evaluations from H1, H2, RQ1, H3, and H4 were statistically supported. Additionally, no interaction effects between VPC comforting quality and stressor severity were observed (ps > .05). Differences were assessed in direct comparisons of less severe stressors (n = 60) and more severe stressors (n = 60). Two variables represented affiliative meaning, and two variables represented relational outcomes.

For relational meaning variables, severity produced a main effect on ratings of *affect*, F (1, 114) = 4.92, p = .028, partial η^2 = .02. When differences in ratings of affect were compared by stressor severity, participants who had been assigned to less severe stressor scenarios reported higher ratings of affect (m = 5.20, sd = 1.61) compared to participants who had been assigned to more severe stressor scenarios (m = 4.69, sd = 1.55), but this difference was significant only when assuming a two-tailed test, t (118) = 1.76, one tailed p = .081 (two-tailed p = .04), d = .32, r^2 = .03; further, this difference was not in the direction predicted by H5. Severity also produced a main effect on ratings of *receptivity*, F (1, 114) = 16.76, p < .001, partial η^2 = .03. When differences in ratings of receptivity were compared by stressor severity, participants assigned to less severe stressors reported higher ratings of receptivity (m = 5.45, sd =1.49) compared to participants who had been assigned to more severe stressor scenarios (m = 4.89, sd = 1.57), but the difference was right at the conventional p < .05 cutoff, t (118) = 2.56, p = .052, d = 36, r^2 = .03.

Within the relational outcomes, there was a main effect of severity on *changes in closeness*, F (1, 114) = 15.96, p < .001, partial η^2 = .05, where participants assigned to less severe stressor conditions reported greater changes in closeness (m = 0.60, sd = 1.81) compared to participants assigned to more severe conditions (m = 0.00, sd = 1.38), t (118) = 2.56, p = .012, d = .37, r^2 =.03. Lastly, there was a main effect of severity on *changes in trust*, F (1, 114) = 4.97, p = .028, partial η^2 = .04, where participants assigned to less severe stressors reported greater increases in trust (m = 0.78, sd = 1.14) compared to participants assigned to more severe stressors (m = 0.31, sd = 1.24), t (118) = 2.15, p = .034, d =.39, r^2 = .03. The remaining main effects of severity on the relational effects were not significant (ps > .05).

Based on these results, H5 was not supported; the linear effect of VPC comfort on relational effects was not stronger for more severe stressors compared to less severe stressors. Additionally, for the specific relational effects of affect, receptivity, changes in closeness, and changes in trust, higher ratings were given in less severe stressors compared to more severe stressors regardless of VPC comforting quality, which did not support the predictions in H5.

H6: Support Provider Sex Moderates Relational Effects

H6 predicted the linear effects of VPC comfort on relational effects would be stronger for female support providers compared to male support providers when receivers face mildly upsetting stressors, but this effect would not be observed for more severe stressors. For H6, all dependent variables measuring relational effects were tested, which included relational frames, relational meaning subcomponents, and changes in relationship quality.

Examining all outcome variables representing relational evaluations (H1-H2, RQ1) and relational outcomes (H3-H4), no two-way interactions between VPC comfort and support provider sex were observed (*p*s > .05), and only one statistically supported three-way interactions between VPC comfort, support provider sex, and stressor severity was observed for changes in liking; the remaining three-way interactions were not statistically supported (*p*s > .05).

There was a significant interaction for *changes in liking* between VPC comfort, severity, and support provider sex, F (2, 117) = 3.19, p = .046, partial η^2 = .04. Decomposition of this interaction effect utilized polynomial trend analysis first revealed a strong linear effect for VPC comfort on changes in liking for less severe stressors, F (2, 57) = 10.41, p < .001, partial η^2 = .27. Female support providers were liked less (m = .40, sd = 1.01) than male support providers (m = .83, sd = 1.41), but the difference was not supported, t (54.69) = 1.32, p = .19.[10] For more severe stressors, there was a strong linear effect for VPC comfort on changes in liking, F (2, 57) =

[10] Levene's test was significant, F =5.067, p = .028. Adjusted degrees of freedom are reported.

13.25, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .43$. Female support providers were liked less ($m = .29$, $sd = 1.27$) than male support providers ($m = .46$, $sd = 1.17$), but the difference was not supported, $t(57) = 0.55$, $p = .59$.

H6 was not supported. First, there were no interactions between VPC comfort and support provider sex, which reveals that ratings of VPC comfort do not vary based on the sex of the support provider. Second, there was only one statistically supported interaction between VPC comfort, support provider sex, and stressor severity, but the results of this interaction revealed results which contradicted the predicted moderating effect.

H7: Support Provider Closeness Moderates Relational Effects

H7 predicted the linear effects of VPC comfort on relational effects would be stronger when receiving support from friends and romantic relationships versus receiving support from family relationships when receivers face mildly severe stressors. For H7, all dependent variables measuring relational effects were tested, which included relational frames, relational meaning subcomponents, and changes in relationship quality.

Examining all outcome variables representing relational evaluations (H1-H2, RQ1) and relational outcomes (H3-H4), no two-way interactions between VPC comfort and the type of relationship shared with the support provider were observed (ps > .05), and no three-way interactions between stressor severity and the type of relationship shared with the support provider were observed (ps > .05).

H7 was not supported. First, there were no interactions between VPC comfort and the type of relationship shared with the support provider (i.e., friend, family member, or romantic partner), which reveals that ratings of VPC comfort do not vary based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider. Second, there were no three-way interactions between VPC

comfort, support provider type, and stressor severity, which suggest there is no moderating effect for stressor severity on ratings based on the type of relationship shared with the support provider.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how the quality of emotional support received for a problem impacts relational well-being. Guided by seven hypotheses and one research question, these hypotheses tested the relational effects of verbal person-centered comforting messages. Three hypotheses and one research question predicted a linear association between VPC comforting quality, relational meaning, and relational outcomes, drawing from person-centered research to predict differences between LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort. Additionally, the three hypotheses predicted the situational and environmental cues impacting the strength of relational effects, drawing from the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes. First, I discuss the results of the seven hypotheses and one research question. Then, I discuss these results in relation to Person Centered Theory, the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes, and Relational Framing Theory, before drawing conclusions about this study in relation to the theoretical postulates in Chapter 2.

Results of Hypotheses and Research Questions

The first two hypotheses made predictions of the relational framing of person-centered comfort, based on the relational frames identified in Relational Framing Theory (Dillard et al., 1996). The first hypothesis predicting HPC comfort would be judged as more affiliative than MPC comfort and LPC comfort was supported; MPC comfort was not, however, clearly differentiated from LPC comfort or HPC comfort. The second hypothesis predicting LPC comfort would be judged as more dominant than MPC comfort and HPC comfort was supported; similar to H1, MPC comfort was not clearly differentiated from LPC comfort or HPC comfort.

The sole research question explored if the predicted patterns in H1 and H2 would be observed in the subcomponents of relational meaning (Burgoon & Hale, 1987). Following the predictions of H1, six subcomponents representing affiliative meaning (i.e., affect, involvement, intimacy, equality, similarity, and receptivity) were tested as dependent variables; in all representations of affiliative meaning HPC comfort received higher evaluations compared to MPC comfort and LPC comfort. Similarly, MPC comfort was not consistently differentiated from HPC comfort; differences did not emerge in the affiliative meanings of immediacy and involvement. The single component representing dominance in RQ1 followed the same pattern predicted in H2 where LPC comfort was evaluated as more dominant than MPC comfort and HPC comfort; likewise, MPC comfort was not clearly differentiated from HPC comfort.

H3 predicted changes in satisfaction would vary as a function of the quality of person-centered comforting; this hypothesis was supported as HPC comfort resulted in positive changes in satisfaction and LPC comfort resulted in negative changes to satisfaction. H4 extended the logic of H3 and tested six representations of relationship quality (i.e., closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust), and found results in support that HPC comfort resulted in positive changes in relational outcomes and LPC comfort resulted in negative changes in relational outcomes. Similar to the results of H1 and H2, MPC comfort was not always clearly differentiated from HPC comfort. MPC comfort was not differentiated from HPC comfort for changes in closeness and changes in trust. Additionally, H4 predicted LPC comfort would produce negative effects; LPC comfort did not produce negative changes in trust.

Three hypotheses acknowledged the situational and environmental factors which may influence the processing of person-centered comfort at lower or higher levels of elaboration and, in turn, account for variation in the relational effects of person-centered comfort. H5 predicted

the relational effects of person-centered comfort would be stronger for more severe stressors, because more severe stressors attune support receivers to critically evaluate the content of support; H5 was not supported. H6 predicted the relational effects of person-centered comfort would be stronger when attributed to female support providers when receivers were facing less severe stressors; H6 was not supported; of the 16 relational meaning evaluations and relational outcomes tested, only changes in liking was moderated by stressor severity and support provider sex but not. H7 predicted the relational effects of person-centered comfort would be stronger in less severe stressors for types of relationships for which young adults have accessible heuristic cues (e.g., friendships and romantic partners) compared to other types of relationships (e.g., family). H7 was not supported.

Contributions to Person Centered Theory

Combined, the results of H1-H4 and RQ1 contribute to Person Centered Theory (PCT). The primary goal of the current study was to advance the known effects of person-centered comfort, recognizing the quality of person-centered comforting impacts relational effects in addition to individual effects (Burleson, 1994b; Jones & Bodie, 2014). The method of investigation and the results ensured the rich area of relational communication was fully represented in this study, drawing from perspectives on relational communication, relational framing, and relationship well-being to identify the relational effects of person-centered comfort (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Dillard et al., 1996; Hendrick, 1988; Rusbult, 1980a, 1980b).

The results suggest evaluations of relational meaning are more robust than changes in relational outcomes following person-centered comfort. One reason may be that relational meaning is embodied in communication and messages (Dillard et al., 1996), while relational effects are likely also affected by perceptions of a current relationship that has been shaped and substantiated by the particular relationship knowledge and relationships (Planalp & Benson,

1992). In other words, reported changes in relational outcomes may be influenced by judgments made from overall evaluations of relationship quality in addition to the specific comforting message, while relational meaning is influenced only by the content and relational meaning expressed in the specific message. The relationships selected in the current study were already well-established relationships, and some pre-manipulation qualities were associated with post-manipulation qualities. Direct questioning of changes in relational quality may be harder to assess when relationships already report high levels of closeness and satisfaction, as these changes are reported relative to current levels of satisfaction, intimacy, and closeness.

Contributions to Dual-Process Theory

The dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes theoretically accounts for differences in message evaluation and processing; the dual-process theory is integral for identifying variation in the effects of predicted in PCT because the dual-process theory identifies situational and environmental differences that influence message processing (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Bodie et al., 2012; Holmstrom et al., 2015).

First, I did not find evidence that stressor severity moderates evaluations of VPC comfort where effects are stronger and ratings higher for more severe conditions (H5), but I did find a main effect for stressor severity for four variables. Regardless of the quality of VPC comfort, the severity of the stressor impacts evaluations of affect and receptivity and outcomes of closeness and trust. These results revealed that when exposed to less severe stressors, receivers evaluated their partners as expressing more affect and receptivity and reported increased positive changes in closeness and trust. When exposed to more severe stressors, ratings were lower. These results contrast theoretical predictions, which predicted stressor severity should moderate the effects of VPC comfort on relational meaning and outcomes because people are evaluating messages more

systematically under increased levels of upset. I confirmed the data were coded correctly and I checked the effects of stressor severity on the message evaluations of helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2000), as well as the effect on the message outcome of affect (R. A. Clark et al., 1998). These results are reported in Appendix F and provide continued support that VPC comfort accounts for greater amounts of variance for more severe stressors when testing dependent variables representing instrumental and identity effects. One explanation may be that the dual-process theory explains variations in instrumental (e.g., coping) and identity (e.g., evaluations of effectiveness or sensitivity) but does not adequately explain relational effects. The observed results also could be due to the study design and specific type of effect studied. Participants were primed to think about relationships and conversations starting with the study recruitment and in the pre-manipulation relationship quality measures. When presented with less severe stressors, participants could fully focus on evaluating relational qualities because they are experiencing only mild levels of upset (e.g., failing a quiz) compared to more severe stressors which should direct focus to the content of supportive messages with systematic evaluation of the content of support in order to feel better about the stressor. However, these results were only found when focusing only on VPC comfort and stressor severity – not in the combined model. Further investigations guided by the dual-process theory are needed to capture variance in relational effects attributed to stressor severity.

Predictions of the moderating role of support provider sex in conditions of mild upset were not supported in H6, nor did the type of relationship moderate VPC comfort in conditions of mild upset in H7. One methodological reason is due to the sample being underpowered to detect medium and large effects – unlike the secondary models estimated in H5, the predictions in H6 and H7 were focused on the interactions between the included factors, so future research

will need to examine these factors closely to determine how these factors impact relational evaluations and outcomes. With no main effects for support provider sex or the type of relationship shared with the support provider, these results hold promise that if moderating effects occur, the explanation rests in the theoretical predictions of the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes. If there had been main effects for support provider sex and the type of relationship, any observed relational effects would have been better explained by existing characteristics of the relationship, rather than the quality of VPC comfort.

Combined, these results contribute to the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes. While at the surface, these results may not seem to be in line with the theoretical predictions, a deeper investigation reveals the relationship context and priming participants to critically evaluate their relationship may account for variations in the relational effects of VPC comfort. Relational effects are proposed as a distinct class of effects, so further research is needed to determine how relational effects are associated with instrumental and identity effects.

Contributions to Relational Framing Theory

The current study bridges and integrates supportive communication and the study of relational meaning in Relational Framing Theory (RFT). Evaluations of support primarily invoke the affiliative frame, but the dominance frame is still relevant to understanding and evaluating comforting messages. The results of relational meaning are particularly important for understanding RFT. First, these results suggest that the various meanings of affiliation and relational control vary as a function of the VPC quality of comforting messages. These effects were strongest in the specific representations of affiliative relational meaning. One reason may be that the representations of affect, immediacy, and involvement share many similarities as all factors represent warmth, enthusiasm, and involvement. Rather than capture trust in direct

measures of relational outcomes, measuring the receptivity and openness (e.g., trust) embodied in affiliative framing may provide a more sophisticated way to represent particular relational effects as the effects on relationship meaning evaluations were more robust than direct assessments of change.

Related to Relational Framing Theory, the current study reveals the importance of relational control in the evaluation of comforting communication. H2 predicted a negative linear association between the quality of comforting communication and evaluations of dominance. The predicted direction was supported, but these findings are also important for understanding relational communication and supportive communication. In the initial theoretical development of person-centered comfort, Burleson (1984b) noted "theoretically, comforting may be viewed both as a type of functional communication and as a type of prosocial behavior" (p. 64). Despite the prosocial intentions of the helper, comforting messages may be evaluated as an attempt to control or influence the feelings of another person. The perception of emotional support as attempts to control another person should be explored further in studies of the relational meaning of support, extended to other forms of support (e.g., instrumental support including advice), and evaluations of dominance in the context of particular relationships (e.g., parent/child relationships).

Relational Framing Theory recognizes the role of situational factors in determining the saliency of relational frames. In the current study, one reason why the frames of affiliation-disaffiliation and dominance-submissiveness were not as strongly influenced by the quality of VPC comforting may be based on two factors. First, one factor is the context in which support was offered; the current study design featured hypothetical scenarios. Hypothetical scenarios may not fully displace one frame in favor of the other frame (e.g., the differential salience

hypothesis), inhibiting processing through a single frame. Second, situational characteristics related to the type of relationship shared with the hypothetical support provider may have similarly inhibited processing through a single frame. Based on prior experiences in that relationship, both frames may be viewed as relevant for understanding relational meanings from the support provider. With three types of relationships explored, future research may need to focus on a single type of relationship at a time to more clearly observe the framing process. One such relationship studied in relational framing theory are friendships (McLaren et al., 2014).

Extending beyond relational framing theory, the type of relationship attributed to the source of comforting messages may also account for the results of the two relational outcomes of loving and liking. Lay conceptualizations of love include distinctions between *eros* (i.e., romantic love), *philia* (i.e., love for friends), and *storge* (i.e., familial or affectionate love; see Lewis, 1960). Participants in the current study may only conceptualize love as a representation of romantic love, which would explain why the main effects of VPC comforting quality on love were small and also explain why reliability estimates were low for items measuring love in family and friend relationships. Similarly, conceptualizations of "attraction" and the relevance of attraction to evaluations of liking may provide similar explanations. Participants in the current study may not recognize other forms of interpersonal attraction, such as task or social attraction which are also based on liking and affection (McCroskey & McCain, 1974). Lay conceptualizations of liking and attraction may also account for issues of measurement validity and reliability as items with the word "attraction" were particularly subject to low factor loadings and low reliability. When employing these relational effects in future studies liking and loving may need to be collapsed into a single concept as both involve affection felt for a relational

partner (Rubin, 1973). More research may be needed to determine the influence of lay conceptualizations of liking and loving on reports of these relational outcomes.

Limitations

The current study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of a between-subjects design in the message perception paradigm (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). Some noted strengths include control over the quality of messages and the measurement of multiple relationship outcomes. Variations in situational characteristics and relationship characteristics were adequately represented. Only one form of emotional support was investigated, but the person-centered hierarchy provided an integral theoretical framework for investigating the relational effects of emotional support. Two limitations related to relational meaning are noted.

One limitation is the perspective used to represent relational meaning. By employing themes and topoi of relational meaning, this study does not directly assess the specific relational meanings embodied that capture the specific relationship shared between the support provider and the support recipient. Planalp (1985) acknowledged relational meaning emerges from talk, but instead argued these meanings are localized to the particular relationship, shared history, and shared experiences within the relationship. Future research should consider these localized and specific forms of meaning and how these meanings represent the relational effects of comforting communication. Study 2 will attempt to address specific conceptualizations of relational meaning by focusing on one particular type of relationship (i.e., friendship) and exploring the relational meanings attributed to supportive messages generated by a friend.

The other limitation related to relational meaning is the focus on written meaning of messages. People infer relational meaning from nonverbal actions as well as verbal actions (Burgoon, Buller, Hale, & de Turck, 1984). Relational Framing Theory theorizes that the activation and saliency of relational frames is particularly dependent on ambiguous verbal or

nonverbal cues (Solomon & McLaren, 2008). The focus on written messages isolated from the context of conversations featuring verbal and nonverbal acts may have impacted activation and processing of messages through the affiliation-disaffiliation frame and the dominance-submissiveness frame, accounting for the results in H1 and H2. Future research should situate relational frames in the context of episodic, conversational contexts in order to determine how judgments of relational frames operate in the supportive conversation context and how these judgments are influenced by comforting communication. Indeed, Study 2 will begin to address these concerns by focusing on the meaning of supportive messages and the framing of relational meaning.

A final limitation is in the power to detect effects in the full factorial ANOVA models. Initially, data were collected with a goal of 20 observations per cell. I derived this number based on guidelines in Keppel and Wickens (2004) as I initially planned only on investigating a 3 (VPC) x 2 (Sex) x 2 (Severity) model, which would have met their recommendations (3 x 2 x 2 = 12). However, as more research was done on the dual-process theory, resulting in the addition of the type of relationship (x3), more observations were needed per cell than were included in the data collection (3 x 2 x 2 x 3 = 36). When I included all possible interaction effects between levels, power was further decreased as I researched more on how to estimate post-hoc power analyses. I did attempt to counter this limitation by running the analyses again in a simplified factorial model for H5; similar procedures were not possible when predicting moderating effects in H6 and H7. I acknowledge this limitation, and my attempts to counter the limitation by re-estimating statistical models when appropriate.

Conclusion

The current study contributes to the study of supportive communication and Person Centered Theory by identifying and investigating the relational effects which vary as a function of the quality of support offered by a relational partner, recognized in Postulate 4. My study design and empirical tests were governed by the theoretical postulates advanced in Chapter 2 and provide additional claims for the legitimacy of the postulates. First, I tested the relational effects identified in Postulate 2, including closeness, commitment, intimacy, satisfaction, and trust. Furthermore, following the arguments of Postulate 2, I tested liking and loving as distinct relational effects. By introducing and integrating perspectives on relational meaning from Relational Framing Theory, I was able to provide evidence in support of Postulate 3, where emotional support embodies relational meaning. I examined the primary frames of relational meaning as well as the various subcomponents of relational meaning. Additionally, I tested situational characteristics identified in the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes. While my results did not support the hypotheses developed from the dual-process theory, I advocated for further inquiry into understanding how these characteristics impact the processing and evaluation of relational meaning and relational outcomes in supportive conversations.

CHAPTER 4
STUDY TWO:
A FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONAL FRAMING OF PERSON-CENTERED COMFORT

This chapter presents a study that tests research questions drawn from the theoretical postulates advanced in Chapter 2. I focus on the argument that emotional support embodies relational meaning (Postulate 3), while still drawing from Postulate 2 which recognizes the relational effects of emotional support. Relational Framing Theory, introduced in Study 1, is employed to identify and test how relational meaning and relational frames represent meanings attributed to comforting communication. After an introduction, I introduce the rationale behind four research questions and five hypotheses. I present the results of a study where the emotional support offered in conversational turns was first coded for verbal person-centered comfort and written responses capturing the meaning of these turns were coded for relational meaning and rated for relational frame relevancy. Then, hierarchical linear modeling was utilized to investigate how judgments of affiliation and dominance at the turn level vary based on person-centered comforting quality, accounting for support recipient judgments of relational framing and the severity of the stressor discussed in supportive conversations. After discussing the results of the four research questions and five hypotheses, I conclude by discussing limitations of the current study.

The Relational Meaning of Enacted Verbal Person-Centered Comfort

Despite the prosocial intentions of comforting another person (Burleson, 1990), not all attempts at helping someone feel better about their problems are successful (Lehman et al., 1986; Lehman & Hemphill, 1990; Servaty-Seib & Burleson, 2007). Similarly, not all attempts at support lead to increased relational satisfaction (Afifi et al., 2013). In Study 1 (Chapter 3), I

found the relational effects of comforting communication vary as a quality of emotional support. In particular, highly person-centered comfort was evaluated as more affiliative in nature and produced positive changes in relational outcomes, while low person-centered comfort was evaluated as more dominant in nature and produced some negative changes in relational outcomes. Particularly, the results of Study 1 suggest evaluations of relational meaning attributed to person-centered comfort are particularly robust, suggesting the need to further explore how support receivers interpret the relational meaning of enacted emotional support. The primary goal of Study 2 is to advance understanding of the relational meaning of person-centered comfort.

Relational meaning evaluations in supportive conversations should occur at various levels of abstraction, including both the level of the conversational turn and the level of the supportive episode or conversation. Support recipients should be able to judge the relevancy of relational frames when reflecting on the supportive conversation as a whole; however, support recipients also should reflect on relational evaluations at the level of the conversational turn. Additionally, the results of Study 1 suggest that both relational frames used to interpret relational meaning may be relevant in supportive conversations. In the current study, relational meaning is explored at two varying levels of abstraction, recognizing that person-centered comforting communication may impact the identification and subsequent framing of relational meaning in either relational frame. In service of the primary goal, I present research questions, hypotheses, and corresponding results aimed at exploring the relational meaning of enacted person-centered comforting communication.

Relational Meaning and Framing of Supportive Conversations

Relational Framing Theory (RFT) seeks to explain the process through which relational meaning is first identified and then interpreted through cognitive structures referred to as relational frames (Dillard et al., 1996). Communicative acts express content meaning, or the information conveyed in a communicative act, as well as relational meaning, how a communicative act is to be taken in the context of the relationship between communicators (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Relational meaning represents how communication reflects and defines relationships (Rogers & Farace, 1975). Solomon and McLaren (2008) argued "RFT centralizes the distinction between content and relational messages, and seeks to explain how people decipher the oftentimes ambiguous relationship component of messages" (p. 108). RFT proposes that relational meaning is understood and evaluated through the relational frames of affiliation-disaffiliation, the esteem and solidary one person has for another, and dominance-submissiveness, the control or influence one person has over another (McLaren & Solomon, 2015). Relational frames are activated based on utterance content (McLaren et al., 2014), and the perceived function of a social episode (Solomon et al., 2002), but the *differential salience hypothesis* suggests effective processing of relational meaning occurs when one frame is judged as more relevant over the other, resulting in the displacement of one frame over the other frame to interpret relational meaning (Dillard et al., 1996).

RFT is a particularly appropriate theoretical framework to guide my research questions because it "highlights the polysemic nature of communication and elucidates the process by which people reach a variety of conclusions from the same cues"(Solomon & McLaren, 2008, p. 121). Within Study 1, the polysemic quality of relational meaning was represented by affiliation-disaffiliation and dominance-submissiveness judgments (Dillard et al., 1996), as well as the

fundamental themes of relational meaning including affect, equality, similarity, and immediacy (Burgoon & Hale, 1987; Dillard et al., 1999). RFT theorists recognize the identification of and subsequent framing of relational meaning is a largely rapid and unconscious process, but people can reflect on the process (McLaren et al., 2014; McLaren & Solomon, 2015; Solomon et al., 2002). When reflecting on meaning, still other interpretations of relational meaning should emerge from conversational and relational contexts due to the polysemic nature of relational meaning.

Relational meaning is activated and evaluated at various levels of abstraction (McLaren & Solomon, 2015). Scholars have employed RFT to examine how people frame relational meaning based on features of the episode (Solomon et al., 2002); episodic features can be likened to judgments made at the level of the conversation like the results of Study 1. RFT scholars have also studied how framing judgments emerge from the content of the utterance (McLaren et al., 2014), providing support that the process of identification and framing explicated in RFT unfolds at more microscopic levels. If a person is asked about the meaning of an utterance, that response could acknowledge content meaning or any number of relational meaning interpretations.

In their explication of content and relational meaning, Watzlawick et al. (1967) acknowledged relational meaning may sometimes fade into the background; this claim, when evaluated in conjunction with RFT, suggests relational meaning is not always readily identified in all communicative acts. A question of interest emerges from RFT and the process of identifying and judging relational meaning: When people are asked what a conversational partner meant in an utterance, do people readily go to content meanings or relational meanings? Commonly, reflections on the process relational framing are elicited through scaled measures

which do not first identify what aspects of a communicative act invoke relational meaning (Dillard & Solomon, 2005).

Enacted support should express content and relational meaning. Goldsmith (2004) argued that "conversation, and any support that is enacted during the course of a conversation, are subject to *evaluation* by the participants" (p. 26, emphasis in original). The identification and subsequent evaluation of relational meaning in supportive conversations may be particularly important for support recipients who also are evaluating the support enacted in the utterances of supportive conversation turns. Evaluations of supportive communication also incorporate multiple judgments of relational partners (Goldsmith et al., 2000); thus, it stands to reason that content and relational meanings are simply one of many evaluations made about a supportive utterance. The first research question is:

RQ1: Do support recipients emphasize relational meaning or content meaning in their evaluations of supportive utterances?

Person Centered Theory and Relational Meaning

Verbal person-centeredness (VPC) is an important quality of supportive messages and is defined as the degree to which a message explicitly acknowledges and provides legitimacy for felt emotions. Low person-centered (LPC) comfort criticizes, denies, condemns, or ignores another person's emotions; moderately person-centered (MPC) comfort implicitly recognizes another person's emotions but focuses on non-feeling centered explanations or distractions; and high person-centered (HPC) comfort explicitly names and elaborates upon another's emotions, offering alternative perspectives about current feelings and emotions (Burleson, 1994b; Jones & Bodie, 2014). The effects of comforting messages vary as a function of the VPC expressed: HPC comfort is judged as more helpful and sensitive compared to MPC or LPC comfort (Bodie

et al., 2012; High & Dillard, 2012; Jones & Burleson, 2003), and HPC comfort produces a greater degree of emotional improvement, one outcome of supportive conversations (Jones, 2004; Jones & Wirtz, 2006). VPC comfort also produces relational effects, as evidenced in Study 1 (also see Afifi et al., 2013).

The type of meaning explicated by a support recipient may vary as a function of the VPC comforting quality of the support provided in a conversational turn. Study 1 found judgments of frame relevancy resulted in higher affiliation-disaffiliation judgments and lower dominance-submissiveness judgments for HPC comfort, but higher dominance-submissiveness judgments and lower affiliation-disaffiliation judgments for LPC comfort. Focusing on relational meaning, relational meaning may be emphasized when responses express HPC comfort. Support recipients may attribute HPC comforting responses as an expression of how much the support provider cares for the support recipient, acknowledging their close relationship because of the content of HPC comfort which names and elaborates on feelings. LPC comfort could also result in responses emphasizing relational meaning; support recipients may emphasize relational meaning responses like the disregard the support provider has for the support recipient when LPC comfort criticizes, condemns, and denies feelings. Recognizing the variability in what type of meaning is highlighted by a support recipient, as well as variability in the quality of VPC comfort a support provider offers, I propose an exploratory research question:

RQ2: Is the quality of VPC comfort offered in a conversational turn associated with the type of meaning attributed to the turn by support recipients?

VPC Comfort and Relational Framing

RFT posits the identification of relational meaning invokes relational frames (Dillard et al., 1996; Solomon & McLaren, 2008), so judgments of relational frames should also vary based on the quality of comfort offered in a support provider's utterance. LPC, MPC, and HPC

comfort capture differences in the expression of *person-centeredness* (Burleson, 1984b, 2003), and the presence of VPC comfort should have different effects on relational framing and judgments of relational frame relevancy. In Study 1, both the affiliation-disaffiliation frame and the dominance-submissiveness frame were relevant in the interpretation of scenarios featuring VPC comfort; the affiliation-disaffiliation frame received higher ratings of relevancy for MPC comfort and HPC comfort, while the dominance-submissiveness frame received higher ratings of relevancy for LPC comfort. Effective processing of relational meaning predicted in *the differential salience hypothesis* suggests one frame should be displaced over another (Dillard et al., 1996); my results in Study 1 suggest the quality of VPC comfort may account for the displacement of relational frames predicted by RFT. I now focus on theorizing how the quality of VPC comfort offered in a supportive utterance should result in changes in frame relevancy, distinguishing between the effects of VPC comfort on the separate affiliation and dominance frames.

HPC comfort and relational framing. HPC comfort demonstrates involvement in a relational partner's situation and a desire to help another person feel better about their emotional state, which may make a receiver think more closely and critically about the relationship shared with the support provider because HPC comfort explicitly acknowledges and elaborates upon the unique feelings of a relational partner (Burleson, 2008). When relational meaning is attributed to HPC comfort in a supportive utterance, the relational frame of affiliation-disaffiliation should be more relevant because this frame organizes relevant expressions of solidarity, liking, and love (Dillard et al., 1996). Based on RFT and the differential salience hypothesis, effective processing of HPC comfort should then involve the displacement of the dominance-submissiveness frame in favor of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame. When support providers

express more HPC comfort in an utterance where the support recipient explicitly recognizes relational meaning, HPC comfort should impact ratings of frame relevancy as the affiliation-disaffiliation frame should be judged as more salient and the dominance-submissiveness frame should be judged as less salient. Formally,

H1A: Increased provision of HPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame.

H1B: Increased provision of HPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame.

MPC comfort and relational framing. MPC comfort expresses implicit recognition of a relational partner's feelings and emotions, relying on non-feeling centered accounts and explanations of events (Burleson, 1984b). MPC comfort may invoke relational meaning when support receivers emphasize the relational implications of similarity and equality embodied in non-feeling-centered explanations of a situation (Burleson, 2008). When support receivers emphasize the relational meaning of MPC comfort, these evaluations should vary in similar patterns as HPC comfort. In Study 1, MPC comfort was only differentiated from LPC comfort on ratings of frame relevancy for both the affiliation-disaffiliation frame and dominance-submissiveness frame, suggesting that MPC comfort may vary in ways similar to HPC comfort. Based on RFT and the differential salience hypothesis, effective processing of HPC comfort should then involve the displacement of the dominance-submissiveness frame in favor of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame. When support providers express more MPC comfort in an utterance where relational meaning is explicitly acknowledged, MPC comfort should impact ratings of frame relevancy as the affiliation-disaffiliation frame should be judged as more salient

and the dominance-submissiveness frame should be judged as less salient, in line with the differential salience hypothesis (Dillard et al., 1996). Similar to H1, H2 is formally stated as:

H2A: Increased provision of MPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame.

H2B: Increased provision of MPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame.

LPC comfort and relational framing. Contrasted with MPC and HPC comfort, LPC comfort should invoke the dominance-submissiveness frame. LPC comfort explicitly condemns, criticizes, denies, or ignores the feelings of a relational partner. In addition to being evaluated more negatively (Bodie et al., 2012; Burleson & Samter, 1985a), LPC comfort also should cause a support receiver to think more critically about the relationship shared with the support provider. When relational meaning is attributed to LPC comfort, support receivers should acknowledge the attempts to control another person's feelings expressed in LPC comfort. Following the differential salience hypothesis, relational meaning attributed to LPC comfort should invoke greater judgments of relevancy for the dominance-submissiveness while the affiliation-disaffiliation frame is judged as less relevant. Following this logic,

H3A: Increased provision of LPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame.

H3B: Increased provision of LPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame.

When testing the three separate hypotheses predicting how the relational meaning of VPC comfort will influence framing judgments at the level of the utterance, I acknowledge the complexity of providing support in conversations. Support providers may respond in various

ways in a supportive conversation (Burleson, 2003; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998). I propose conceptualizing the *utterance* as a *conversational turn,* acknowledging that this representation of an utterance may express various representations of VPC comfort in the same utterance, depending on the length of said conversational turn. At the same time, however, the conversational turn is an appropriately segmented unit of analysis for the support recipients evaluating enacted support. Relational meaning and subsequent relational framing judgments may be influenced by the proportion of each level of VPC comfort in a turn. I propose an exploratory research question to best contextualize H1-H3 which recognizes,

RQ3: When controlling for proportion of VPC comfort in a supportive turn, which representations of VPC comfort impact relational framing judgments?

The first three research questions and hypotheses focus on relational framing at the level of the supportive utterance. However, these utterances occur in a supportive conversation (Goldsmith, 2004). There may be other characteristics of a supportive conversation which account for the offering of VPC comfort and the subsequent relational framing of VPC comfort at the level of the utterance and the level of the conversation.

Stressor severity and relational framing. First, stressor severity may influence subsequent relational framing. Sharing stressors and accompanying emotions should build and reinforce relationships with others (Rimé, 2009); when sharing more serious stressors, support recipients may be more aware of relational implications of comforting communication and the affiliation-disaffiliation frame should be more relevant. In Study 1, preliminary analyses revealed general evaluations of supportive conversations resulted in greater affiliation-disaffiliation ratings compared to dominance-submissiveness ratings. When more severe stressors are discussed, judgments of dominance-submissiveness frame relevancy should

decrease because conversations about more severe stressors should result in the displacement of the dominance-submissiveness frame in favor of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame. By opening up to the support provider, support recipients should frame the conversation as an affiliative experience. The fourth hypothesis focuses on stressor severity, conceptualized as a characteristic of the conversation, and proposes that:

H4A: Sharing more severe stressors in supportive conversations increases judgments of the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame.

H4B: Sharing more severe stressors in supportive conversations decreases judgements of the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame.

Utterance framing and conversational framing. Drawing from RFT, the relevancy of relational frames at the utterance level may be associated with relational framing process at the conversation level. Judgments of frame relevancy occur at different levels of abstraction, including both the episodic level and the utterance level (Solomon & McLaren, 2008). Judgments made at the utterance level may influence the relational meaning attributed to conversation. If a support provider views affiliation as more relevant to interpreting a specific utterance within a conversation, these judgments may also influence how relational meaning is emphasized and framed when reflecting on the supportive conversation as a whole. When the affiliation frame is already activated and relevant at the utterance level, the meaning interpreted from the conversation should also reflect affiliative meaning. Similarly, when the dominance frame is already activated and relevant at the utterance level, the meanings interpreted from the conversation should also reflect meanings of dominance. Another two-part hypothesis is predicted:

H5A: The relevancy of affiliation framing of conversational turns influences ratings of affiliation frame relevancy for the whole conversation.

H5B: The relevancy of dominance framing of conversational turns influences ratings of dominance frame relevancy for the whole conversation.

Combined with H1-H3, H4 and H5 represent the complexities in accounting for variance in turn-level ratings of relational meaning. The final research question will explore the conversational factors predicted in H1-H5, recognizing the need to control for these factors in exploring the effects of VPC comfort, stressor severity, and conversation frames:

RQ4: When accounting for VPC comfort, stressor severity, and conversational frames, which factors impact relational framing judgments and account for variance in these ratings?

Study Summary and Plans for Data Analysis

The goal of the current study is to examine the impact of VPC comfort on the relational frames of affiliation-disaffiliation. Five hypotheses and four research questions have been advanced. I now summarize how these research questions advance the study goals, and describe how I will test the research questions and hypotheses.

First, I will focus on the relational context of friendships; Study 1 and other studies support that friends engage in supportive conversations (Leatham & Duck, 1990; MacGeorge, Guntzviller, Hanasono, & Feng, 2016; Winstead, Derlega, Lewis, Sanchez-Hucles, & Clarke, 1992). The support provider's conversational contributions will be coded for verbal person-centeredness, representing the natural frequency and occurrence of comforting communication. Because both the relational context and conversational context provide natural variability, these contexts are particularly well-suited for the proposed research questions and hypotheses.

The current study design features interaction analysis paradigm, where relational partners discuss current stressor(s) in a setting where conversations can be transcribed and coded (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). A strength of the interaction analysis paradigm is that friends can provide ratings before and after conversations; these ratings can be analyzed and compared to coded information about the quality of support offered in the conversation (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002).

The first two research questions present the opportunity to explore how support recipients acknowledge the intended relational meaning of comforting communication, and determine if differences in VPC comforting quality are associated with the explication of relational meaning. Recognizing that relational meaning has multiple interpretations, some driven by the conversational and relational context, the first research question will be explored through the coding of open-ended responses of meaning. These open-ended meaning responses were collected about the support provider's conversational turns, completed after the supportive conversation. Assuming relational meaning is evoked from supportive talk, that meaning, according to RFT, is framed in terms of social control (dominance) or social affinity (affiliation). The relational frames of dominance-submissiveness and affiliation-disaffiliation are proposed to be dominant mental structures used to interpret and judge relational meaning (Dillard et al., 1996); as such, coders should be able to access these innate structures to identify and evaluate responses where the relational frames are more (or less) relevant when evaluating relational meaning responses. After coding these responses for the type of meaning explicated and the relevancy of relational frames, I will examine the relative frequency of VPC comfort in content meaning and relational meaning responses. The first research question will be explored through

descriptive analyses; the second research question will be explored through descriptive and inferential analyses.

Three hypotheses and a research question predict how the quality of VPC comfort provided in the conversational turn impact judgments of relational framing, while the fourth hypothesis predicts effects of stressor severity on turn-level framing. The final research question explores the combined effect of all predictors on relational frame judgments. These hypotheses and final research question will be explored using hierarchical linear models. I will be estimating models that include level-2 (conversation) information about the relational frame and stressor severity and level-1 (turn) information about the VPC comfort of conversational turns. The level-1 factors include the proportion of VPC comfort (H1-H3; RQ3); the level-2 factors include stressor severity and conversation level framing judgments (H4, RQ4). These models will test the separate outcome variables of level-1 affiliation frame judgments and dominance frame judgments. After estimating null models, I will test a series of models featuring the predictor variables for H1-H4. Following the recommendations of Hox (2010), along with the theoretical logic used to introduce each hypothesis, each predictor variable will first be modelled separately to test the hypotheses before exploring combined models in the final two research question.

Method

The data collected in this study were part of a research competitiveness grant [LEQSF(2011-14)RD-A-04)] awarded to Dr. Graham Bodie by the National Science Foundation through the Louisiana State University Board of Regents. I served as a research assistant to Dr. Bodie during the period in which data were collected, and I was part of the research team which developed the Supportive Conversation Assessment Rubric (SCAR) used to determine the level of VPC of conversational turns. These data are used with the permission of Dr. Bodie.

Participants

Participants (*N* = 166; 83 dyads) were students enrolled in introductory-level Communication Studies courses at Louisiana State University in the Fall of 2013. Participants were recruited from a Sona Systems® message board which lists all available research opportunities. Studies must be approved by the Institutional Review Board before in order to be visible on the Sona Systems® message board (See Appendix G). In exchange for participating, participants received a small portion of class credit (3% of their course grade). The study was entitled "Disclosing & Listening to Upsetting Events in Friendships" on the message board. Participants were presented with a description of the study prior to selecting an appointment time (See Appendix H). In these instructions, participants were informed they would need to bring a friend to the research laboratory in order to participate in the study. Additionally, as the research assistant, I was responsible for sending reminder emails prior to their study appointment that also reminded participants to bring a friend to their selected appointment time (in Appendix H).

The total sample was composed of 66.87% female participants (*n* =111) and 33.13% male participants (*n* =55). Participants were approximately 19 years old (*M* = 19.94 years; *Mdn* = 19 years, *Mode* = 19 years, *SD* = 3.26 years), but ranged in age from 18 years old to 48 years old. Participants reported their ethnic identity by selecting all relevant categories. The majority of the sample identified as Caucasian (73.17%, *n* = 120), though participants also identified as African-American or Black (19.51%, *n* = 32), Asian-American or Asian (3.66%, *n* = 6), Hispanic-American or Hispanic (1.83%, *n* = 3), Latino or Latina (1.22%, n = 2), and Pacific Islander (0.61%, *n* = 1). Three participants (1.83% of the sample) elected to specify their ethnic background in open-ended textboxes; these participants described their ethnicity as Asian/White (*n*=1) and West Indian (*n* =2). The majority of participants were students enrolled at Louisiana

State University; 29.52% were classified as Freshmen (*n* = 49), 29.52% were classified as Sophomores (*n* = 49), 24.10% were classified as Juniors (*n* = 40), 15.66% were classified as Seniors (*n* =26). Only two participants were friends who were not enrolled at Louisiana State University (1.20%). The majority of participants were affiliated with other academic programs offered at the University (85.5%, *n* = 142); only 8.43% of participants were majors (*n* = 14), and 6.02% of participants were minors (*n* =10) within the Department of Communication Studies.

Procedures

Pre-conversation procedures. Participants arrived at their scheduled appointment and were greeted by two research assistants. Research assistants were graduate students in the Department of Communication Studies. Participants were seated on a couch in the Matchbox Interaction Lab and were asked to sign and complete the Institutional Review Board approved consent forms which explained the study procedures and granted permission for researchers to record, transcribe, and use their responses (See Appendix I). After completing the consent form, research assistants followed a standardized script to ensure the procedures were standardized for all dyads (See Appendix J).

First, participants were randomly assigned to either disclose or listen to an upsetting event. Participants were assigned to these roles by drawing slips of paper labeled "Discloser" or "Listener." Disclosers, because they disclosed and subsequently received support for an upsetting event, are referred to in this study as *support recipients*. Listeners, because they responded to the event disclosure and offered support in their conversational turns, are referred to in this study as *support providers*. After roles were assigned, participants were briefly separated. The support provider remained in the interaction laboratory and was seated at a

desktop computer. Research assistants directed the support provider to complete a series of pre-conversation measures (instrumentation in Appendix K).

During this time, the support recipient was directed to a desktop computer situated in the adjacent observation room. The support recipient also completed a series of pre-conversation measures. Additionally, the support recipient was given a form to complete to identify the stressor they would disclose and were then asked to rate each event on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all emotionally distressing; 7 = very emotionally distressing; see Appendix K). Research assistants were instructed to read the stressor descriptions and ratings and select the lower rated event; in the case of equally rated stressors, research assistants were instructed to try and pick academic events if one was listed. The stressors disclosed were rated as moderately distressing (M = 4.59, Mdn = 5, SD = 1.29), and included academic stressors (e.g., failing quizzes/exams, deciding on a major, graduation, plans for graduate study), romantic stressors (e.g., fights with dating partners), stressors involving family members (e.g., getting along with siblings), stressors involving other friends (e.g., fights with roommates), and other stressor (e.g., health problems, problems with pets). After rating the stressor and completing measures assessing their feelings about the stressor, support recipients were brought back into the interaction laboratory and seated on the sofa.

Conversation procedures. Participants were given instructions prior to their five-minute conversation, following a standard script used by all research assistants (See Appendix J). These instructions included the instructions for the support provider to "respond as you normally would respond when talking to your friend about distressing events." Research assistants left the interaction laboratory and went into the observation room to record the conversation. Research assistants knocked on the door to signal to participants when to begin the five-minute

conversation. While the conversation unfolded, research assistants wrote down the starting and stopping times for the support provider's conversational turns. After five minutes, the conversation was stopped, research assistants returned to the interaction laboratory, and the research assistants separated the participants for a final time. The support provider remained in the interaction laboratory with one research assistant, and the support recipient returned to the observation room with the other research assistant.

Post-conversation procedures. Both participants completed post-conversation measures on desktop computers (Appendix K). These measures had participants evaluate the conversation, report on their behavior in the conversation, as well as report on their partner's behavior in the conversation. While separated, the participants' final task was to watch and rate the 5-minute supportive conversation, specifically evaluating the support provider's conversational turns. The video recording was played back and paused after each conversational turn enacted by the support provider. Participants then evaluated the support provider's contributions to the conversation: Support providers were instructed to evaluate what they said during the turns, while support recipients were instructed to evaluate what their friend said during the turns. Participants were encouraged to rewind and listen to contributions again if needed. After completing an evaluation sheet for the contribution (Appendix L), playback of the recording resumed. The recording was stopped again after the next support provider contribution, and this process was repeated until the last support provider contribution. After participants finished watching the conversation and rating the support provider's contributions, participants were de-briefed. Friends who did not sign up in the Research Participation System were manually added to the study by research assistants who asked for their account information. All participants were

provided a handout with information about the student health center and their counseling services. Research credit was granted 24-48 hours after the appointment.

Friendship Characteristics

Three questions were used to characterize the relationship between participants. The first categorical question asked participants to indicate the length of time participants had known each other. Fifty-seven participants (34.34%) indicated they had known each other less than a year, and 109 (65.67%) participants indicated they had known their relational partner for over a year: 33 (19.88%) one to two years, 13 (7.83%) 2-3 years, 24 (14.46%) 3-4 years, 27 (16.27%) 5-10 years, and 12 (7.23%) over 10 years.

The second relationship characterization question asked participants to estimate the length of time participants had been friends, recognizing that friendships may develop after an initial acquaintance. The length of friendships ranged from 1 month to 416 months (34.6 years), and the average length of the reported friendship was 38.80 months (SD = 58.60 months), or about 3.23 years. Participants were asked a dichotomous question indicating if they considered the person they brought to the lab their friend. All but one participant indicated they were friends with their conversational partner (n = 165, 99.4%). The one dyad where the participant indicated he/she was not friends with their conversational partner was retained in the analysis because the other partner indicated they were friends.

Utilizing the demographic information supplied by the participants, the dyad composition information was compiled based on the roles assigned during the procedures section. There were in total 52 female support providers and 31 male support providers, with 45 (54.22%) female support receiver-female support provider dyads, 14 (16.87%)female support receiver-male support provider dyads, 7 (8.43%) male support receiver-female support provider dyads, and 17

(20.48%) male support receiver-male support provider dyads. While not used in the primary analyses, this information is reported to describe the quality of the relationship.

Closeness. Participants assessed the closeness of their friendship using the Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS, Dibble et al., 2012). The URCS comprises 11 statements measured on a seven-point Likert scale. Internal consistency was acceptable for the URCS (α = .97). The average score across all 11 items was 4.31 (*SD* = 1.60, Mdn = 4.23, Range 1-7).

Satisfaction. Participants assessed their satisfaction with their friendship using the Relational Assessment Scale (RAS, Hendrick, 1988). The RAS comprises 7 items with scale boundaries of 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). Two items were reverse coded prior to analyses. Internal consistency was acceptable for the RAS (α = .74). The average score across all 7 items was 4.39 (*SD* = 1.01, *Mdn* = 4.43, Range 1-7).

Descriptive information is provided to substantiate the claim that the friendships included in the current analyses are relatively close and intimate. These items are not included in any of the primary analyses.

Conversation Measures

Relevance of relational frames. During the post-conversation evaluations, support recipients evaluated the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame and the affiliation-disaffiliation frame for the entire conversation. Following procedures identified by Dillard and Solomon (2005), support recipients (*n* = 83) were presented with an extended example to explain dimensions and how relevance judgments are made for different objects of analysis, similar to Study 1 and listed in Appendix K. After reading the example, support recipients were asked to rate the relevancy of dimensions for the 5-minute supportive conversation. Participants were

presented with a series of eight word pairs representing the two dimensions of affiliation-disaffiliation and dominance-submissiveness. The word pairs for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame included positive regard/negative regard, attraction/aversion, affection/disaffection, and liking/disliking. The word pairs for the dominance-submissiveness frame included dominance/submission, influence/comply, persuade/concede, and controlling/yielding, with scaling boundaries capturing 5 points (1 = completely irrelevant; 5 = completely relevant).

All reliability and validity evaluations follow criteria identified in Study 1. Measurement models were estimated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis in AMOS 22.® Ten values were replaced with the item mean prior to model estimation (1.50% of 664 total possible values). The two-factor correlated model was slightly below conventional thresholds, $\chi 2$ (19) = 42.35, p = .002, CFI = .87, RMSEA = .12 (.07, .17), SRMR = .08. Reliability estimates for the dominance scale items reached conventional thresholds, α = .75, as did affiliation scale items, α = .70.

Table 4.1: Model Fit Statistics for Relational Framing Relevancy

	χ^2	df	p	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	Affil .α	Dom.α
Original Model (retained in analyses)								
All items (8)	42.35	19	.002	.87	.12	.08	.70	.75
Modified models (1 item removed)								
Without *liking/disliking*	36.92	13	.001	.83	.15	.09	.54	
Without *attraction/aversion*	31.74	13	.003	.87	.13	.08	.65	
Without *dominance/submission*	17.89	13	.162	.96	.07	.06		.69
Without *persuade/concede*	39.46	13	.001	.83	.16	.10		.71
Modified models (multiple items removed, see parentheses next to model description)								
Without both affiliation items (6)	26.26	8	.001	.83	.17	.10	.37	
Without both dominance items (6)	14.69	8	.065	.94	.10	.06		.54
Removing all low-performing items (4)	0.77	1	.38	1.00	.00	.02	.37	.54

I acknowledge the CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR values are slightly outside recommended cutoffs, but I tested all possible iterations of the model and selected the model that resulted in the most appropriate combined fit for reliability and measurement model validity.

VPC Transcription

Support provider turns are the primary unit of analysis. These turns correspond with the conversation evaluations completed by the participants in the post-conversation procedures. Person-centeredness is a characteristic of messages, necessitating the need to work from written transcripts where the person-centered quality of a message can be readily and consistently identified. The coding process included (a) transcript creation, (b) utterance unitization, (c) VPC coding, (d) turn labeling, and (e) VPC variable creation. Summary information from the Supportive Communication Assessment Rubric (SCAR) is included in Appendix N, and a completed transcribed conversation is included in Appendix O. After transcription, ratio variables were created for each conversational turn.

Transcription creation. Transcripts were created from the video recordings of the dyads, and the spoken messages in these transcripts are at the basis of the current analysis. The initial transcripts were created by four undergraduate research assistants enrolled at Louisiana State University during the Spring 2014 semester. Research assistants created these transcripts in Microsoft Word while playing back the recording in VLC (VideoLAN Client version 1.1.11), an open-source, cross-platform media player. Research assistants were encouraged to stop and rewind sections of talk, as well as slow down the playback speed (e.g., .70X, .80X) in order to accurately represent the speech. Segments of talk were labeled, where L represented the person seated on the left hand side in the video (the support recipient) and R represented the friend seated on the right hand side in the video (the support provider). Undergraduate research

assistants were instructed to create a written record of the conversation, focusing on the spoken contributions of participants. Nonverbal contributions (e.g., nodding, facial reactions, and/or gestures) were not recorded on the transcripts. Nonverbal aspects of vocality and delivery also were not represented in the transcripts. I have included an example of the types of nonverbal contributions not captured in the transcript in Appendix M, with a completed transcript example in Appendix N. While some research assistants represented pauses (with ellipses), interruptions (with dashes), laughter (with "haha" or "lol"), or indicated vocal behaviors (i.e., laughing, singing, humming) on their transcripts, these vocal cues were later removed when the transcripts were checked and cleaned by a second set of research assistants in the Fall 2014 semester.

The initial transcripts were further cleaned, coded and rated following the procedures outlined in the Supportive Conversation Assessment Rubric (SCAR; Vickery et al., 2015, November-a; Vickery et al., 2015, November-b, see Appendix O). The SCAR procedures were conducted on a large corpus of supportive conversations (including the current data) over the course of four academic semesters: Fall 2014, Spring 2015, Summer 2015, and Fall 2015. Undergraduate research assistants were recruited from Louisiana State University and the University of Minnesota; the undergraduate research assistants were overseen by the primary developers of the SCAR manual, Dr. Bodie (LSU) and Dr. Jones (UM). Undergraduate research assistants were provided copies of the SCAR manual and received ample training from the primary developers of the manual over multiple 2-hour sessions. Graduate students at both institutions contributed to the SCAR manual, were trained on coding procedures, held office hours for coders, and contributed to the process by checking transcripts. The graduate students who participated include: Kellie Brisini (Penn State), Kaitlin Cannava (LSU), Carly Danielson (UM), Laura Hatcher (LSU), Michael Navarro (LSU), myself, and Luke Youngvorst (UM).

Unitization. During the unitization step, segments of talk were divided into utterances, or "independent clauses, standing by itself or occurring along with one or more dependent clauses" (Auld & White, 1956, p. 273). The SCAR manual provides definitions and examples for simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, independent clauses, dependent clauses, coordinating conjunctions, and subordinating conjunctions. Reliability estimates are measured with Guetzkow's U, which is appropriate for count data. Estimates provided by Dr. Graham D. Bodie and Dr. Suzanne Jones, the primary investigators who developed the SCAR coding procedures, reveal the Guetzkow's U across 9 coders was u = -.01 (SD = .03, Range = -.07 - .03) who coded these and other supportive conversations following SCAR procedures.

VPC coding. During this phase of the SCAR process, only those units offered by the support provider were coded for VPC. During the training offered in the SCAR manual, examples are provided for all 9 levels of the person-centered hierarchy. Coders are instructed to focus first on the action expressed in the utterance (e.g., empathy, acknowledgements, validation, and elaboration) in order to identify the major category of the hierarchy. After identifying the major category, coders identify the level that best fits the utterance. Low person-centered messages involve the action of denying and challenging feelings with the levels of condemning (1), challenging (2), and ignoring (3). Moderate person-centered messages involve the action of offering content-focused references to experiences and communicate understanding with the levels of diverting/compensating (4), acknowledging/sympathizing (5), and content-based paraphrases and questions (6). High person-centered messages involve the action of feeling-centered recognition and elaboration, with the levels of recognition (7), elaboration (8), and reframing (9). An additional level, 0, was reserved for uncodeable responses from the form and intent phases. Zero responses were excluded from analyses. Reliability estimates are measured

with Cohen's Kappa, which estimates agreement between coders, while correcting for chance levels of agreement. Reliability estimates provided by Dr. Graham D. Bodie and Dr. Suzanne Jones, the primary investigators who developed the SCAR coding procedures, suggest intraclass correlations and Cohen's Kappa estimates were above .70 during all phases of coding and rating this selection of supportive conversations and the other included supportive conversations.

Turn labeling. After the transcripts were coded following all four phases of the SCAR procedures, turn information was added to the transcripts for the current project during the Fall 2015 semester. From these turns, I tabulated the total number of utterances in a turn, along with the total number of LPC responses, MPC responses, and HPC responses in a turn.

Two undergraduate research assistants were provided with the list of turns, the times of these turns, the SCAR coded transcripts, and the videos. Undergraduate research assistants were given detailed instructions to (a) watch the video while reading through the transcript, (b) highlight all units said by the support provider during each turn, (c) label the units in each turn with the turn number and time (e.g., #1, 2:16-2:22), and (d) ensure all turns in the video were labeled on the transcript.

In the current project, I only use the transcribed information from the support provider's conversational turns. It should be noted, however, that some support provider responses, including backchannels (e.g., "mhm," "yeah") are not represented in these turns. Initially, there were 872 turns in the 83 dyads; the adjusted total was 868 turns. Four turns (0.45% of the total turns) were deleted prior to analysis because there was no transcribed information in these turns or the turns were labeled "inaudible."

VPC variables. VPC variables were created for support provider's turns. There were four total variables created. I excluded all zero-level utterances in the total utterance count.

First, there were ratio variables for each major level of the person-centered hierarchy: (a) LPC comfort, (b) MPC comfort, and (c) HPC comfort. The LPC ratio was created by summing the number of utterances in a turn coded in levels 1, 2, and 3, and then dividing by the total number of utterances in the turn. The MPC ratio variable was created by summing the total number of utterances in a turn coded in levels 4, 5 and 6, and then dividing by the total number of utterances in the turn. The HPC ratio was created by summing the number of utterances in a turn coded 7, 8, and 9 and then dividing by the total number of utterances in the turn.

Representing the person-centered hierarchy of VPC, I also created a variable that captured the VPC-score for each turn. This variable captured the average VPC-score for the turn. For example, Dyad 35 (Turn 1) had two utterances, one coded as a 5 and the other coded as a 6. The average rating (5 + 6 / 2 = 5.5) for this turn was 5.5, representing a moderately person-centered turn. When creating these variables, any zero responses were excluded and the number of utterances adjusted. For example, Dyad 36 (Turn 1) had six utterances: four utterances were coded as a 5, one utterance was coded as a 4, and one utterance was coded as 0 ("I mean"). If this turn would have been calculated with the zero-coded utterance, it would not accurately reflect VPC coding (5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 + 0 / 6 = 4). In these turns, the zero-coded utterances were excluded and the total number of utterances adjusted, resulting in a more accurate representation of VPC-scores at the turn level (5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 4 / 5 = 4.8). From the 868 turns, 19 turns had to be deleted prior to analyses because all utterances in the turn were coded as zeros, bringing the total number of support provider turns analyzed to 849. After creating the VPC-score, I created another variable representing the three major levels: LPC responses (1.00 – 3.99), MPC responses (4.00 – 6.99), and HPC responses (7.00 – 9.00). This variable was used in the descriptive results for RQ1 and additional inferential results for RQ3.

Relational Meaning Coding

During the post-conversation procedures, participants wrote responses to open-ended responses for each support provider conversational turn. Support providers provided a written response to the question, "What did you mean?" while support recipients provided a written response to the question, "What did your friend mean?" While all responses were included in the coding procedures, the results present only the analyses of the support recipient's responses. The total 1,724 written responses ranged from one word to 33 words in length (M = 9.04 words, SD = 4.79 words, *Mdn* = 8 words, *Mode* = 6 words). The written length did differ based on role, t (1685.17) = 2.67, p = .008, d = .13, r^2 = .06,[11] where support providers (m = 9.35, sd =5.13) wrote more words on average than did support recipients (m = 8.74, sd = 4.42).

I developed a codebook to train undergraduate research assistants on how to identify meaning responses which emphasized relational meaning. The codebook was based on explanations of content and relational meaning in Watzlawick et al. (1967) and other references (i.e., Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Edwards, 2011). In developing the codebook, I consulted with Dr. Edwards, Dr. Bodie, and Dr. Pecchioni to ensure my representation of relational meaning was accurate and appropriate. Additionally, their input ensured the codebook was understandable for undergraduate research assistants who assisted in the coding process. The final version of the codebook is presented in Appendix P.

Codebook description. The coding manual has five major components (see Appendix P). The coding manual begins with: (a) a section that reviews the definitions of content meaning and relational meaning in scholarly literature; followed by (b) a section that introduces codebook readers and coders to relevant aspects of the study design; (c) a section that introduces codebook

[11] Levene's test for equality of variance was significant, F = 15.96, p < .000; adjusted degrees of freedom are reported.

readers and coders to the object of analysis (i.e., the written responses); (d) a section that describes the process for determining and classifying responses into content-focused responses or relational-focused responses; and (e) applies the coding procedures to an example dyad, explaining the coding process in detail and how written responses were classified. The first draft of the codebook included frame saliency judgments, but the frame relevancy section was removed prior to final coding and included in a separate codebook (in Appendix P).

The operational definitions of content meaning and relational meaning are based on what meaning is foregrounded and mentioned in the open-ended response. Content meaning responses report on the original communication, using the same or similar wording to restate the original communication. Content meaning responses do not deviate from the original communication, except for the use of synonyms (e.g., "difficult" versus "hard") or in the replacement of proper nouns with articles (e.g., "Carly" versus "she"). Relational meaning responses focus on how the message was understood or interpreted, capturing how respondents report "taking" the original communication. Relational meaning responses express an interpretation, analysis, or unique understanding of what a message meant, deviating from the report provided in responses emphasizing content meaning.

Content meaning reliability. Establishing intercoder reliability for the classification of content/relational meaning occurred during the Fall semester of 2015. The first round of intercoder reliability involved three undergraduate research assistants, a graduate student volunteer, and myself as coders. Copies of the codebook were distributed prior to the first meeting and coders were asked to read the manual prior to the meeting. At the first meeting, coders read, reviewed, and discussed the coding manual sections, reviewed the example video and transcript, and then completed one more example video as a group. All coders then coded

the responses in 8 randomly selected dyads. These 8 dyads represented 10% of the total dyads. With 98 support recipient responses and 97 support provider responses, the 195 responses represented 22.36% of the total responses. Cohen's Kappa was estimated, which accounts for chance agreement. I generated Cohen's Kappa estimates comparing each coder individually to my own classifications. Then, I compared all coders against the other coders, generating the full range of Cohen's Kappa estimates. In total, Cohen's Kappa estimates were below conventionally accepted guidelines for coder agreement. The average estimate, comparing each coder to my own values, was $\kappa = .42$ for support recipient responses and $\kappa = .36$ for support provider responses. Additionally, the other 4 coders were compared: Their average estimate for support recipient responses was $\kappa = .27$ (range = .21 - .47) and their average estimate for support provider responses was $\kappa = .31$ (range = .13 - .60).

Intercoder reliability was attempted again using all five coders. Before the next coding meeting, the code book was slightly revised to introduce more theory from Watzlawick et al. (1967), and coders were asked to read the second chapter of *The Pragmatics of Human Communication* prior to the meeting. During the second intercoder reliability attempt, I met individually with coders in one-on-one meetings as the first and second phases took place during the midterm examination week. We reviewed differences in selected files, discussed changes in the coding manual, watched another example video, and then coders were assigned new files to code. There were 8 randomly selected dyads (10%) with 93 support recipient responses and 93 support provider responses (186 responses; 21.33%) in the second intercoder reliability attempt. When comparing coders to my coding, the average reliability estimate improved to Cohen's $\kappa = .51$ (Range = .32 - .67). For support recipient responses, the average was $\kappa = .49$ and for support provider responses the average was $\kappa = .52$. Additionally, the other 4 coders compared; their

average among support recipient responses was κ = .38 (range = .33- .41) and their average among support provider responses was κ = .41 (range = .21 - .58).

One final intercoder reliability attempt was attempted. Before starting the final round, two of the undergraduate coders were assigned other research projects due to their continued low reliability. The volunteer graduate coder was unable to continue due to time constraints and other commitments, resulting in the coding being completed by me and one advanced undergraduate coder. In the prior phase of reliability coding, the undergraduate research assistant and I had higher intercoder reliability ($\kappa_{Support\ recipient\ responses} = .68$; $\kappa_{Support\ provider\ responses} = .48$) compared to the other three coders. Before completing a final round of coding, we met one-on-one, discussed coding procedures, reviewed prior disagreements item by item, and coded three example files together. Individually, we each coded 8 more files (129 total responses) and reliability estimates were acceptable, $\kappa_{Support\ recipient\ Responses} = .76$, $\kappa_{Support\ provider\ Responses} = .85$ (Average κ =.81). The remaining files were assigned to both coders, with the undergraduate research assistant coding 41% (*n* = 34) of the files while I coded the remaining files (*n* = 27, 32.5%).

Relational Frame Ratings

A second codebook was developed for rating frame relevancy judgments on all responses emphasizing relational meaning. Originally the second codebook was part of the first codebook draft reviewed by Dr. Bodie, Dr. Pecchioni, and Dr. Edwards. The relational frame codebook was developed to explain how to determine frame relevancy of the meaning responses by evaluating the content of the meaning responses. Coders utilized the same coding sheets developed for coding featured in the meaning coding process. Again, all relational meaning

responses from both support providers and support recipients were rated, but only the support recipients are included in the results section. The full codebook is in Appendix Q.

Codebook description. The frame relevancy codebook has four major sections (See Appendix Q). The first section is a brief definition and summary of the two relational frames. The second section duplicates the same detailed example of tactile surface judgments typically provided to study participants (Dillard & Solomon, 2005; Hollins et al., 1993); coders were asked to read the instructions and then rate the relevancy of the different frames (e.g., hard/soft, loud/quiet) for the example objects presented (e.g., eraser, sandpaper, velvet). In the second section, coders are also given the scales and word pairings for the relational frame judgments. The third section asks coders to work together to identify frames which are relevant to describing three common household items. Within this third section, one example frame (temperature) complete with word pair (hot/cold) is developed for an example item (a cup of coffee). Then, coders work together to rate the relevancy of their frames for all three common household objects, discussing disagreements. The final section asks coders to practice together on one file in order to discuss agreements in rating relational frames on the written responses. Coders rated the relevancy of four word-pairs in describing the relational meaning responses. Two word-pairs represented the dominance-submissiveness frame, influence/comply and persuade/concede; two word pairs represented the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, affection/disaffection and liking/disliking. These items were selected based on their high factor loadings in the initial scale development and testing in Dillard and Solomon (2005). Word-pairs were rated on a five-point scale (1 = completely irrelevant, 5 = completely relevant). The relational framing codebook is in Appendix Q.

Frame relevancy reliability. In the Spring 2016 semester, I trained an undergraduate research assistant on the process of rating frame relevancy and we then established reliability prior to coding. For the first training session, the undergraduate coder was instructed to review the codebook and read about relational framing (Solomon & McLaren, 2008). We went through the code book together and completed the examples before coding 50 relational meaning responses (15.57% of responses) from 10 dyads (12% of conversations). The average rating for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame was estimated, Krippendorf's $\alpha = .58$ and the average rating for the dominance-submissiveness frame was estimated, Krippendorf's $\alpha = .37$. All ratings were below desired intercoder reliability estimates (Range .33-.59). In reviewing these data, many differences were due to differing perspectives of the intensity of framing evaluations. We would both code a frame as relevant, but would differ on the relevancy of that frame (e.g., a 5 versus a 3), with my values demonstrating more conservative scaling.

Following the initial round of coding, the coder was provided additional readings, and we met to discuss coding differences. During this meeting, we discussed our similarities and differences on the coded responses and reviewed readings describing the concept of relational communication (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Dillard et al., 1999; Watzlawick et al., 1967). After this meeting, we coded 40 relational meaning responses (10.59% of responses) from 8 dyads (10% of conversations), and reliability estimates improved for both frames. Intercoder reliability estimates for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame were averaged at Krippendorf's $\alpha = .74$, and the estimates dominance-submissiveness frame were averaged at Krippendorf's $\alpha = .73$ (Range .73-.74).

Coding was completed over a two week period. There were 237 files that needed to be coded after the two rounds of intercoder reliability. The undergraduate research assistant coder

was responsible for coding 180 unique files (75.95%), and I coded 57 unique files (24.05%). Additional files were randomly assigned so reliability could be assessed at the end of the coding project. An individual not associated with the current project was asked to randomly pick 45 responses (14% of responses) to assign to both coders; he was instructed to pick 45 responses from complete conversations (8 conversations; 10%) as to not raise suspicions among coders. He included these files in the separate coding assignment documents and then sorted the order by dyad number so we would not know what files were being coded by both coders. The second set of reliability statistics were generated after coding was completed so the dual-coded files could be properly identified. Intercoder reliability estimates for the affiliation-disaffiliation frame averaged Krippendorf's $\alpha = .70$ and the average rating for the dominance-submissiveness frame was estimated, Krippendorf's $\alpha = .69$. Affiliation frame ratings were based on the average rating of the two affiliation items; similarly, dominance frame ratings were based on the average rating of the two dominance items. Ratings of frame relevancy served as level-1 outcome variables in H1, H2, H3, and RQ2. Table 4.2 summarizes reliability statistics in all phases of coding.

Table 4.2: Summary of Reliability Estimates for Relational Framing Coding

	Round 1		**Round 2**		**Final Check**	
Frame	*α*	*n*	*α*	*n*	*α*	*n*
Affection/Disaffection	.567	50	.738	40	.703	45
Liking/Disliking	.588	50	.738	40	.703	45
Affiliation/Disaffiliation (Average)	*.578*		*.738*		*.703*	
Influence/Comply	.331	50	.727	40	.699	45
Persuade/Concede	.407	50	.727	40	.699	45
Dominance/Submissiveness (Average)	*.369*		*.738*		*.699*	

Exploratory Analyses

First, before conducting the planned analyses, I compared the closeness and satisfaction scores for support providers and support recipients. Average scores on the URCS did not differ based on conversational role, t (164) = 0.38, p = .34. Average scores on the RAS did not differ based on conversational role, t (164) = 0.49, p = .31. The URCS and RAS were highly correlated, r = .62, p < .001, r^2 = .38. The URCS was correlated with the length of time dyad members had been friends, r = .31, p < .001, r^2 = .09. The RAS was also correlated with the length of time dyad members had been friends, r = .32, p < .001, r^2 = .10.

I conducted preliminary checks on the variables created for the study. First, I checked differences in frame relevancy. The mean affiliation framing observer rating was 2.45 (*SD* = .91), the mean dominance framing observer rating was 2.19 (*SD* = .90), with a statistically significant difference, t (342) = 2.66, p = .008, d = .28, r^2 = .02. The mean receiver affiliation frame rating was 3.51 (*SD* = .82), the mean receiver dominance framing rating was 2.88 (*SD* = .96), with a statistically significant difference, t (164) = 4.55, p < .001, d = .70, r^2 = .11.

At both levels of abstraction, the affiliation frame was more relevant compared to the dominance frame. I also checked for similarities between the two levels of conversation framing. To do so, I averaged turn-level observer ratings for each conversation and compared these average observer ratings to the support recipient's ratings. As seen in Appendix R, the 172 relational meaning responses came from 59 of the 83 conversations. Affiliation ratings at both levels were positively associated, but the coefficient was not significant, r = .20, p = .13. Dominance ratings were positively associated, but the coefficient was also not significant. r = .12, p = .38.

Finally, I checked the VPC comforting variables. Mean VPC turn-level ratings were compared in a one-way ANOVA which revealed a main effect, F (2, 846) = 656.48, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .61$, linear effect ($p < .001$), and provided evidence that the average VPC turn-level rating differed between LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort (all ps < .001). These values are presented in Table 4.3, along with summary descriptive information for all variables used in the primary analyses.

Variable Creation Summary

The research questions explored in the current study employ variables derived from scaled instruments as well as variables derived from coded data. Table 4.3 summarizes the variables used in the analyses, acknowledging the level of analyses, a description of the variable, and reports the central tendency, dispersion, skewness, and kurtosis of the variable.

Variable centering in HLM. A common practice in HLM is the centering of level-1 variables, based on either the grand mean or group means (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998). With uneven groups, I centered level-1 VPC comfort variables on the grand mean instead of group means and provided detailed information about the centered variables in Table 4.3. Additionally, I centered the level-2 framing variables on the grand means of conversational affiliation-disaffiliation frame ratings and conversational dominance-submissiveness frame ratings (Enders & Tofighi, 2007). The other level-2 variable, stressor severity, was coded as a categorical variable with two levels (low severity as 0; high severity as 1) so I did not center that variable. Hox (2010) stated, "centering the explanatory variables has the additional advantage that variances of the intercept and the slope now have a clear interpretation. They are the expected variance when all explanatory variables are equal to zero, in other words, the expected variance

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics Summary for Study 2 Variables

Variable	Level	Description	*M* (*SD*)	Range	Skew.	Kurt.	*n*
Coded Relational Framing (Dependent Variables)							
Affiliation Frame Observer Ratings	Turn	Observer coded rating of affiliation-disaffiliation in relational meaning responses	2.45 (0.91)	1.00-5.00	-0.01	-0.35	172
Dominance Frame Observer Ratings	Turn	Observer coded rating of dominance-submissiveness in relational meaning responses	2.19 (0.90)	1.00-5.00	0.64	-0.02	172
Conversation Characteristics (Level-2 Independent Variables)							
Stressor severity	Conversation	Support receiver rating of stressor severity (Mdn = 5.00). Split into categorical variable (36 below; 47 above)	4.59 (1.29)	1.00-7.00	-0.21	-0.31	83
Affiliation Frame Receiver Ratings	Conversation	Support receiver judgment of affiliation-disaffiliation	3.51 (0.82)	1.50-5.00	-0.29	-0.04	83
Dominance Frame Receiver Ratings	Conversation	Support receiver judgment of dominance-submissiveness	2.88 (0.96)	1.00-5.00	0.18	-0.26	83
LPC Ratio	Turn	Proportion of LPC responses coded in turn	0.08 (0.25)	0.00-1.00	2.94	7.25	849
MPC Ratio	Turn	Proportion of MPC responses coded in turn	0.89 (0.28)	0.00-1.00	-2.50	4.76	849
HPC Ratio	Turn	Proportion of HPC responses coded in turn	0.02 (0.13)	0.00-1.00	6.44	45.24	849
LPC Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of LPC x 100 (easier interpretation)	8.37 (25.26)	0.00-100.00	2.94	7.25	849
MPC Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of MPC x 100 (easier interpretation)	89.30 (28.02)	0.00-100.00	-2.50	4.76	849
HPC Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of HPC x 100 (easier interpretation)	2.70 (13.17)	0.00-100.00	6.44	45.24	849

Continued

Table 4.3, Continued: Descriptive Statistics Summary for Study 2 Variables

Variable	Level	Description	*M* (*SD*)	Range	Skew.	Kurt.	*n*
Centered Variables (Level-1 and Level-2 Analyses)							
LPCRatiox100_C	Turn	Proportion – Mean (8.37)	0.00 (25.26)	-8.37 – 91.63	2.94	7.25	849
MPCRatiox100_C	Turn	Proportion – Mean (89.30)	0.00 (28.02)	-89.30 – 10.70	-2.50	4.76	849
HPCRatiox100_C	Turn	Proportion – Mean (2.70)	0.00 (13.17)	-2.70 – 97.30	6.44	45.24	849
VPCTurn_C	Turn	Turn value – Mean (5.31)	0.00 (0.93)	-4.31 – 3.69	-1.37	2.50	849
Support Receiver Affiliation_C	Conversation	Ind. Rating – Mean (3.51)	0.00 (0.81)	-2.01-1.49	-0.01	-0.35	83
Support Receiver Dominance_C	Conversation	Ind. Rating– Mean (2.88)	0.00 (0.95)	-1.89 – 2.11	0.64	-0.02	83
Additional Analyses, VPC Turn Variables							
VPC Turn	Turn	Average VPC score for the turn	5.31 (0.93)	1.00-9.00	-1.36	5.48	849
LPC Avg. Turn	Turn	VPC Score: *LPC comfort o*	2.90 (0.55)	1.00-3.83	-0.98	3.99	66
MPC Avg. Turn	Turn	VPC Score: *MPC comfort*	5.48 (0.59)	4.00-6.55	-0.79	2.77	770
HPC Avg. Turn	Turn	VPC Score: *HPC comfort*	7.15 (0.55)	7.00-9.00	3.17	11.08	13
VPCTurn_C	Turn	Turn value – Mean (5.31)	0.00 (0.93)	-4.31 – 3.69	-1.37	2.50	849
Additional Analyses, MPC Comfort							
MPC-4 Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of MPC-4 responses in turn	4.95(18.88)	0.00-100.00	4.10	16.35	849
MPC-5 Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of MPC-4 responses in turn	33.95 (41.31)	0.00-100.00	0.68	-1.24	849
MPC-6 Ratio x 100	Turn	Proportion of MPC-4 responses in turn	50.46 (45.27)	0.00-100.00	-0.01	-1.81	849

Note. Only one set of variables created for MPC comfort are presented, but the full procedures include creating centered variables.

for the 'average' subject (p. 61). The rationale for centering variables is to aid interpretation of slope coefficients because the slopes in HLM models represent average slope values across all conversations. Centered variables are also presented in Table 4.3 with descriptive information for each variable including measures of central tendency, skewness, and kurtosis.

Results

The four research questions and five hypotheses were advanced to explore relational meaning in supportive conversations, predicting that VPC comforting quality should impact relational framing. I present the results in the order they were developed, beginning with the first two exploratory research questions, followed by the hierarchical models testing the five hypotheses and final two research questions.

Relational Meaning of VPC Comforting Communication Conversation al Turns

The first two research questions were advanced to explore how support recipients explicitly reference content meaning or relational meaning, while recognizing the meaning emphasized may be related to the VPC comforting quality offered by the support provider in a conversational turn. First, the VPC comforting quality of the support provider's conversational turns was coded. Additionally, to determine the meaning attributed to responses, the support receiver's open-ended responses to the meaning of the support provider's conversational turns were coded and classified based on the focus emphasized in the response. Differences in VPC comforting quality, content meaning, and relational meaning, are compared in a series of inferential analyses.

In total, there were 849 conversational turns and corresponding support recipient meaning responses analyzed from 82 conversations.[12] There were 172 responses which focused on the relational meaning and 677 responses which focused on the content meaning. Responses focusing on the relational meaning expressed in a conversational turn represented only 25.40% of the total responses.[13] Of the 849 conversational turns, 7.8% of turns were composed of LPC comfort, 90.7% of turns were composed of MPC comfort, and 1.5% of turns were composed of HPC comfort

As part of the descriptive analyses, I examined some patterns in the responses which emphasized relational meaning, recognizing that these meanings arise out of the conversational and relational contexts. Relational meaning responses acknowledged the *shared relationship* between support provider and recipient; these relational meaning responses emphasized the support provider's knowledge of past events or the similarities between the support provider and recipient; these responses may best capture reflections on the interpretations of what statements mean in the context of the relationship as support receivers interpreted questions, reflections, and other content as statements as reflections of shared relationship history. The majority of these responses represent interpretations of relational meaning which emerge from the supportive relational context: Relational meaning responses reflected themes of *understanding,* where responses acknowledged that the comforting communication offered by the support provider reflected an understanding of the support recipient's feelings and emotions from the current conversation. Relational meaning responses also explicitly acknowledged *support*, explaining

[12] One conversation, Dyad 42, featured no substantive turns because the support provider did not offer any responses other than backchannels ("mhm"; "yeah"); these backchannel responses were not evaluated by the support provider or the support recipient.

[13] Support provider responses ("What did you mean?") were also coded during the procedures detailed in the prior section. From the support provider's responses, an additional 147 relational meaning responses were identified but these responses are not included or described further in the present analyses.

the intentions of support providers to reassure or support the support recipient. There are relational meaning responses recognizing that support providers were *advocating* for particular actions in their supportive turns. Other relational meaning responses were truly unique to the particular conversation and relationship, describing the perceived intentions interpreted in a particular statement. Table 4.4 provides examples of responses focused on relational meaning and the corresponding VPC comforting communication expressed in the original conversational turn.[14]

Table 4.4: Examples of VPC Comfort and Corresponding Relational Meaning Responses

Relational Meaning Example	Written Response	Content of Supportive Turn	VPC Turn Score
Relationship References (8.15%)	*"She knows school means a lot to me"* (Dyad 16, Turn 2)	"I think you'll be okay $_4$ / Your, your mindset in school $_4$ / I mean $_0$"	4
Support - *General* (25%)	*"She was comforting me"* (Dyad 15, turn 8)	"Right $_5$ / So now it's a little more manageable $_6$"	5.5
Support - *Advocacy* (20.93%)	*"I need to learn something this semester in order to do good next semester"* (Dyad 73, Turn 4)	"Ain't you taking it next semester$_6$?"	6
Support - *Understanding* (31.97%)	*"That she understands"* (Dyad 6, turn 12)	"Oh $_5$ / So she knows Ross really well $_6$"	5.5
Other (13.95%)	*"Joke"* (Dyad 48, Turn 8)	"He was once lost $_6$ / but now he was found $_6$?"	6

Note. Subscript numbers represent the VPC score for the utterance. Individual utterances are separated by slashes.

Contrasted with relational meaning responses, content meaning responses focus on the literal reporting of the content. For content meaning, responses simply restate the same information reported in the original VPC comforting message. A cursory examination of these

[14] I conducted intercoder reliability checks for these categories in Spring 2016 on relational meaning responses only. During these coding processes, the relational meaning of responses from Study 1 were also checked and coded. After meeting and coding a subset of the files (n = 49), myself and another coder coded a subset of the files (n = 49), reaching acceptable intercoder reliability κ = .78.

responses during intercoder reliability suggest some responses use the same language classifying relational meaning responses, but with different content-focused accounts of meaning. Relationship information is explicitly expressed in the content of VPC comfort and replicated again in the written responses from the support receiver. Understanding mirrors statements of understanding from the support provider (e.g., "I understand," "I can see why"), duplicating the same content as the supportive turn because some support providers said phrases that explicitly stated understanding. Other examples of content meaning continue to replicate the exact content of the turn by reporting on what was said or reflecting on the intention of the content. Examples of content meaning are displayed in Table 4.5. Unlike relational meaning responses, the 677 content meaning responses are not classified into categories; examples are provided only for descriptive and comparative purposes to illustrate how content meaning is reflected in responses.

Table 4.5: Examples of VPC Comfort and Corresponding Content Meaning Responses

Content Meaning Example	Written Response	Content of Supportive Turn	VPC Turn Score
Relationship References	*My friend was referring to the semester I took off from school when she said "Is that why you went back?"* (Dyad 1, Turn 3)	"Is that why you went back $_6$?"	6
Support - *General*	*"She meant that everything will turn out okay"* (Dyad 69, Turn 4)	"Yeah $_5$ / It'll be fine $_4$"	4.5
Support - *Advocacy*	*"I should seek help from my professor."* (Dyad 33, Turn 5)	"You should – did you talk to the professor $_6$?"	6
Support - *Understanding*	*"He understood why my parents felt that way"* (Dyad 30, Turn 3)	"I can see why $_5$."	5
Other	*"Asking the date"* (Dyad 15, Turn 12)	"When is the dance marathon $_6$?"	6

Note. Subscript numbers represent the VPC score for the utterance. Individual utterances are separated by slashes.

The exploration of the association between the quality of VPC comforting communication and the corresponding meaning emphasized in the support recipient's responses begins with comparisons of the categorical differences in VPC comfort and the focus of meaning responses. First, a 3 (VPC Classification) x 2 (Meaning Response) contingency table was utilized in a chi-square analysis to determine the general association between VPC comforting quality and the meaning emphasized in the support recipient's responses. The results of the chi-square analysis revealed a significant association between VPC quality and the type of meaning response, $\chi 2$ (2) = 7.69, p = .021; however, the chi square analysis violated assumptions as the number of HPC comforting turns emphasizing relational meaning had fewer than five expected observations (n = 3). The *phi* measure of association between categories suggested a weak association between VPC comforting quality and the type of meaning emphasized in the response (φ = .09, p = .021). Table 4.6 summarizes the frequency of content focused meaning responses and relational meaning focused responses for LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort.

Table 4.6: Frequency of Meaning Responses by VPC Comforting Quality

VPC Comforting Quality	Content meaning focused responses	Relational meaning focused responses	Total Responses: VPC Comfort
LPC Comfort	44	22	66
	(6.5%)	(12.8%)	(7.8%)
MPC Comfort	623	147	770
	(92.0%)	(85.5%)	(90.7%)
HPC Comfort	10	3	13
	(1.5%)	(1.7%)	(1.5%)

Note. Table presents column frequency percentages to compare content/relational meaning.

Next, a binary logit model was estimated to determine if the categorical quality of VPC comfort predicts the relational focus in the meaning responses. The dependent variable predicted relational meaning (coded as 1) responses compared to content meaning responses (coded as 0). The independent variables included the proportion of VPC comfort (LPC, MPC, and HPC

comfort). The overall logit model was significant, $\chi 2$ (3) = 11.10, p =.011, although it should be noted that the distribution for the dependent variable is skewed, with only 172 relational meaning responses and 677 content meaning responses. The pseudo-R^2 was .01, but the proportional reduction in error, represented in the adjusted count R^2, was 0.00.[15] When controlling for the proportion of VPC comfort offered in a conversational turn, all forms of VPC comfort similarly predict the outcome of relational meaning. Table 4.7 summarizes the parameter estimates for the logit model.

Table 4.7: Parameter Estimates for Logit Model Predicting Relational Meaning Responses

Dependent Variable	*b*	*Se*	*z*	*p*	*odds ratio*	*predicted probability*
LPC Comfort	-.06	.06	-1.03	.31	.93	.48
MPC Comfort	-.07	.06	-1.18	.24	.93	.48
HPC Comfort	-.07	.06	-1.11	.27	.93	.48
Constant	6.01	6.33	0.95	.34		

Note. Adjusted count R^2 = .00.

In response to the first research question, the majority of conversational turns represented moderately person-centered comforting responses. The majority of responses focused on the content meaning of conversational turns, versus the relational meaning of conversational turns. The remaining analyses focus on the 172 relational meaning responses, which observers rated for frame relevancy.

VPC Comfort and Turn-Level Relational Framing

The four hypotheses and final research question were tested in hierarchical linear models where subjects (turns) are nested within cases (conversations). Two separate level-1 outcome variables were predicted, including (a) affiliation frame relevancy ratings and (b) dominance

[15] I also estimated a logit model with the VPC turn level variable (range 1-9). The results were similar: The overall model was significant, $\chi 2$ (1) = 11.89, p < .001, pseudo-R^2 = .01. The VPC turn variable had similar effects on the classification of relational meaning, (b = -.29, se = .08, z = -3.51, p < .001, log odds = .74, predicted probability = .43). Further analyses with the VPC turn-level variable appear in Appendix T.

frame relevancy. In this section, I first present the results of an unconstrained (null) hierarchical linear model, followed by random coefficients models (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). All models are accompanied by the equations representing the models. I tested all models in SPSS 23® and Stata/SE 12,® but I present the results from the Stata model estimations which include z-scores for parameter estimates. The method of estimation was maximum likelihood (ML), following the guidance and examples provided by Hayes (2006). Unstandardized values are presented, following typical convention in HLM models (Hayes, 2006).

Power considerations in HLM. First, power analyses recommend calculating power prior to data collection, recognizing the costs incurred in typical hierarchical linear models (e.g., pupils nested in classrooms). Researchers have developed rules to guide a priori power estimates: Kreft (1996) suggested the "30/30 rule," where researchers should sample thirty groups (*N*) with thirty individuals (*n*) in each group; Hox (2002), however, acknowledged the 30/30 rule is most applicable for fixed effects, not random effects. For models estimating variance components, covariance components, and cross-level interactions, Hox (2002) suggested the "100/10 rule," with about 100 groups (*N*) with about 10 individuals (*n*) in each group. Other estimates comparing simulated data reinforce this suggestion, where fewer groups with more subjects are preferable to more groups with fewer subjects (Mok, 1995). A priori power analyses also rely on balanced designs, with a balanced number of individuals within each group (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998).

The current data were not balanced, with a mean number of 2.9 relational meaning coded turns per conversation (*SD* = 2.29, *Mdn* = 2, *Range* = 1-9, *N* = 59 conversations, *n* = 172 turns).[16] Additionally, 35.6% of the conversations contain only 1 relational meaning turn, and 23.7% of

[16] Only 59 of the 83 conversations have relational meaning turns. Appendix R reports descriptive frequencies of responses for all conversations.

the conversations contain 2 conversational turns. Only 13 conversations featured ordered sequences of two (or more) relational meaning responses. As the proportion of relational meaning responses (and subsequent ratings of frame relevancy) was unknown prior to the analyses, I did not conduct any a priori power estimates but estimated the power of my sample to detect effects. I used the program PinT (power analysis n two-level designs) to compare my sample size to the calculated recommendations for sample size. PinT was written by Tom Snijders, Roel Boster, and Henk Guldemond; the program is based on formulas in Snijders and Bosker (1993).[17] The sample size determination is based on the within-groups covariance matrix, between groups covariance matrix, the residual variance at level-1 and the random effects covariance for level-1 variables and level-2 variables. Based on the PinT analyses, my data should have a minimum of 5 observations per group, and the number of groups should be at least 5. My design exceeds the recommended number of groups (N = 59), but I only have fourteen groups with 5 or more observations (23.72% of all groups). Other methods for determining the power of a sample utilize the design effect formula to determine the effective sample size and traditional power tables; based on my results using that method I am underpowered for small effects.[18] HLM analyses are most appropriate for hypotheses predicted and present the current results, but I acknowledge the sample is underpowered to detect small

[17] Program and operating manual are available for download at: https://www.stats.ox.ac.uk/~snijders/multilevel.htm

[18] I calculated the effective sample size from a modified the design effect statistic (Kish, 1965, as cited in Hox, 2010, p. 5), following the procedures in Hox (2010). The design effect equation is:

$$n_{eff} = \frac{n}{[1 + (n_{clus} - 1)\rho]}$$

In this equation, n_{eff} represents the effective sample size, based on n, the total sample size, n_{clus}, the cluster size (group size), and ρ is the intraclass correlation. Averaging the intraclass correlation coefficient from the two dependent variables (.155), using the average group size of 2.9, and using the total sample size of 172, the effective sample size for the current analyses is approximately 134 (134.41). Using the effective sample size of 134, I followed the recommendations of Hox (2010) to consult power tables (J. Cohen, 1992). With an effective sample size of 134, α set at .05, and the combined 5 predictors, the approximate power analyses utilized in multivariate analyses are .19 for small effects (f^2 = .02), .94 for medium effects (f^2 = .15), and > .99 for large effects (f^2 = .35).

effects. I also estimated OLS regression models for all hypotheses and research questions, presented in Appendix S; these OLS regression models do not group together responses within a dyad like HLM.

Null model estimates. First, I estimated unconstrained means models for (a) affiliation frame relevancy ratings and (b) dominance frame relevancy ratings. The unconstrained means model tests if differences between conversations account for variance in an outcome variable. These models feature no independent variables, only the grouping variable (conversations), and are best suited for providing preliminary descriptive information about between-conversation and within-conversation variance in frame ratings. Raudenbush and Bryk (2002) label this model the one-way ANOVA model because of the conceptual similarity to analysis of variance models. Other sources reference this model as a baseline model or null model (Hayes, 2006); the baseline model term is used because the unconstrained model is compared to other models, and the null model term is used because there are no predictor variables. The general equation for the null model is:

$$Y_{ij} = \mu + \alpha_j + r_{ij}$$

where Y represents the linear outcome of μ, the grand mean, a series of deviations from the grand mean (α_j), and the random error associated with the *i*th turn in the *j*th conversation (r_{ij}). The subscripts represent individual turns with relational meaning (i = 172) and the conversations with relational meaning turns (j = 59). The same formula is relevant for the outcomes of (a) ratings of affiliation framing and (b) ratings of dominance framing. Two models were estimated. The first model has the dependent variable of affiliation framing, and the second model has the dependent variable of dominance framing.

The results of the null model provide descriptive information useful for interpreting and comparing models estimated for H1-H4 and RQ3. One outcome of the null model is the estimate for the grand mean. In examining the intercepts of the models, the estimated grand mean for affiliation ratings is 2.49 (*se* = .083); the estimated grand mean for dominance ratings is 2.15 (*se* = .082). Additionally, another outcome of the null model is the intraclass correlation coefficient. For both models, intraclass correlation coefficient estimates, $\hat{\rho}$, were derived from the covariance parameter estimates; the estimates for affiliation frame ratings ($\hat{\rho}$ = .16) and dominance frame ratings ($\hat{\rho}$ = .15) suggest that 16% of affiliation frame ratings and 15% dominance frame ratings is attributed to the conversation. The results of the null models suggest conversations vary in ratings of affiliation framing and dominance framing. Furthermore, only a small amount of variance is attributed to the conversation itself as a way to group ratings, suggesting level-1 variables like VPC comfort and level-2 variables like stressor severity may account for variance in frame ratings.

Table 4.8 presents the coefficient and intercept estimates, along with the variance components, for the null model and H1-H3 with affiliation frame ratings as the dependent variable. Table 4.9 presents the coefficient and intercept estimates, along with the variance components, for the null model and H1-H3 with dominance frame ratings as the dependent variable.

Random coefficients (H1-H3). After generating the null models, I estimated random coefficients models to test H1- H3. Random coefficient models permit the level-1 predictor variables of VPC comfort to vary by conversation (Hox, 2010; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Support for hypotheses is found in the statistical significance of the correlation coefficient, which

captures the average slope for the predictor variable-dependent variable across all included conversations.

H1 equation. The general equation for the random coefficient model for H1 is as follows. For H1A, the outcome (Y_{ij}) is affiliation turn-level ratings and for H1B, the outcome (Y_{ij}) is dominance turn-level ratings.

Level 1 HPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{HPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 HPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1j}$;

Combined: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\,\text{HPCRatioC}_{ij} + \mu_{0j} + \mu_{1j} + r_{ij}$

The components of the equation include (a) the average frame rating across the population of conversations (γ_{00}); (b) the average HPC-frame regression slope across conversations (γ_{10}); (c) the residual or conditional variance when controlling for conversation *j* (μ_{0j}); (d) the unique increment accounting for the *slope* associated with conversation *j* (μ_{1j})*;* and (e) the random error associated with the *i*th turn in the *j*th conversation (r_{ij}).[19] Two models were estimated for H1: Model 1A has the predictor variable of HPC comfort and the outcome variable of affiliation frame ratings; Model 1B has the predictor variable of HPC comfort and the outcome variable of dominance frame ratings for H1.

H1 results. H1 predicted an increase in HPC comfort results in an increase in turn-level affiliation framing, but results in a decrease in turn-level dominance framing. H1 was partially supported in the two models testing the two-part hypothesis. In Appendix S, OLS regression models mirror the level-1 random coefficients results.

[19] Fixed effects and random effects have slightly different interpretations in hierarchical models. Hayes (2006) suggested conceptualization and interpretation to "think in terms of *fixed components* and *random components"* (p. 389, emphasis added). Fixed components should be equal across all conversations regardless of what is happening at the level of the conversational turn, while random components should vary across conversations.

Table 4.8: HLM Results for Turn-Level Ratings of Affiliation Frame Relevancy, H1-H3

	Null Model				H1: HPC				H2: MPC				H3: LPC			
Affiliation	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
HPC					0.01	0.00	1.09	.28								
MPC									0.00	0.00	0.68	.49				
LPC													0.24	0.16	1.48	.14
Intercept	2.48	0.08	29.85	.001*	2.48	0.08	29.84	.001*	2.48	0.09	2.51	.001*	2.49	0.09	29.30	.001*
Variance Components																
	var	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.69	0.08			0.69	0.08			0.61	0.08			0.63	0.09		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.13	0.07			0.13	0.07			0.16	0.00			0.14	0.08		
HPC u_{1j}					0.00	0.00										
MPC u_{2j}									0.00	0.00						
LPC u_{3j}													0.00	0.00		
Intraclass correlation coeff. $\hat{\rho}$	0.16	0.08			0.15	0.08			0.21	0.09			0.18	0.09		
Model Fit	Wald $\chi 2$ n/a				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) = 1.19, p = .27				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) = 0.46, p = .50				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) = 0.66, p = .41			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed *p* values.[±] Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) [*] Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

Table 4.9: HLM Results for Turn-Level Dominance Frame Relevancy, H1-H3

	Null Model				H1: HPC				H2: MPC				H3: LPC			
Dominance	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
HPC					-0.01	0.00	-2.11	.04*								
MPC									0.00	0.00	0.35	.73				
LPC													0.00	0.00	0.66	.51
Intercept	2.16	0.08	26.07	.001*	2.17	0.08	26.73	.001*	2.16	0.08	26.39	.001*	2.15	0.08	26.08	.001*
Variance Components																
	var	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.69	0.09			0.67	0.08			0.66	0.08			0.67	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.12	0.07			0.11	0.07			0.11	0.07			0.11	0.07		
HPC u_{1j}					0.00	0.00										
MPC u_{2j}									0.00	0.00						
LPC u_{3j}													0.00	0.00		
Intraclass correlation coeff. $\hat{\rho}$	0.15	0.08			0.14	0.08			0.15	.08			0.15	0.08		
Model Fit	Wald χ2 n/a				Wald χ2 (1) =4.45, p = .04				Wald χ2 (1) = 0.10, p = .76				Wald χ2 (1) = 0.44, p = .51			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed p values.$^{\pm}$ Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) * Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

H1A predicted an increase in HPC comfort results in an increase in the relevancy of affiliation framing. First, the overall model was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient estimate slightly decreased from the null model, suggesting poor overall model fit. The coefficient representing the average slope of HPC comfort-affiliation ratings outcomes was not significant, suggesting that the average proportion of HPC comfort does not have a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversations. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level affiliation rating, controlling for the average proportion of HPC comfort. The intercept had a similar value as the estimated grand mean in the null model which suggests controlling for average proportion of HPC comfort across all conversations has a significant influence on average frame ratings, but did not produce a large change to the turn-level affiliation ratings. Additionally, the average proportion of HPC comfort did not account for any variance in the model. H1A was not supported.

H1B predicted an increase in HPC comfort results in a decrease in the relevancy of dominance framing. First, the overall model was significant but the intraclass correlation coefficient accounts for less variance than the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of HPC comfort-dominance ratings outcomes was significant, suggesting the average proportion of HPC comfort does have a significant effect on different ratings of dominance across the include conversations. Additionally, the results replicated in Appendix S featuring OLS regression models also demonstrated support for the findings that as the proportion of HPC comfort increases in conversations, there was a negative effect on dominance ratings, in line with theoretical predictions. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level dominance rating, controlling for the average proportion of HPC comfort; controlling for average proportion of HPC comfort results in a slight increase in estimated turn-level

dominance ratings compared to the null model, but the increase is primarily attributed to rounding (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *1B intercept* = 2.165). The average proportion of HPC comfort does not account for any variance in the model. Because of the statistically supported coefficient demonstrating a negative effect of HPC comfort on ratings of dominance H1B was supported, resulting in only partial support for H1.

H2 equation. Two models were estimated for H2: Model 2A has the predictor variable of MPC comfort and the dependent variable of affiliation frame ratings; Model 2B has the predictor variable of MPC comfort and the dependent variable of dominance frame ratings for H2. The general equation for the random coefficient model for H2 is:

Level 1 MPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 MPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1j}$;

Combined: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\,\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}$

The same equation is applicable for both outcomes of affiliation framing and dominance framing, represented by the same components as the formula for MPC comfort.

H2 results. H2 predicted an increase in MPC comfort results in an increase in turn-level affiliation frame relevancy, but results in a decrease in the relevancy of the dominance fame. H2 was not supported in the models testing the two-part hypothesis, including those models utilizing OLS regression.

H2A predicted an increase in MPC comfort is associated with an increase in the relevancy of affiliation framing. First, the overall model was not significant, while the slightly increased intraclass correlation coefficient suggests an improved model fit compared to the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC comfort-affiliation ratings

outcomes was not significant, suggesting the average proportion of MPC comfort does not have a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversation. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level affiliation rating, controlling for the average proportion of MPC comfort. Across all conversations, there was no change to the estimated intercept when controlling for the average proportion of MPC comfort compared to the null model (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *2A intercept* = 2.483). Additionally, the average proportion of MPC comfort does not account for any variance in the model. H2A was not supported.

H2B predicted an increase in MPC comfort results in a decrease in the relevancy of dominance framing. First, the overall model was not significant, with the same intraclass correlation coefficient estimate as the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC comfort-dominance ratings outcomes was not significant, suggesting the average proportion of MPC comfort does not have a significant effect on different ratings of dominance across the included conversations. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level dominance rating, controlling for the average proportion of MPC comfort. There are no differences in the intercept compared to the null model (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *1B intercept* = 2.156). Controlling for average proportion of MPC comfort does not influence turn-level dominance ratings. Furthermore, the average proportion of MPC comfort does not account for any variance in the model. H2B was not supported.

Additional H2 analyses. Recognizing that the descriptive analyses of RQ2 reveal that the majority of responses feature MPC comfort, I conducted additional analyses capturing the separate ratio variables of MPC-4 (redirecting focus), MPC-5 (implicit recognition), and MPC-6 (non-feeling-centered explanations). The same HLM equation applies for these analyses, but with each separate centered independent variable. Additionally, these models were estimated

separately for the dependent variable of affiliation ratings, presented in Table 4.11; and the dependent variable dominance ratings, presented in Table 4.12.

Additional H2 results (MPC-4). The overall model predicting affiliation ratings was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient remains similar to the null model coefficient. The intercept was similar to the null model when accounting for the average proportion of MPC-4 comforting responses (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *MPC-4 intercept* = 2.485). The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-4 comfort-affiliation rating outcomes was not significant. The average proportion of MPC-4 comfort does not account for any variance in the model.

The overall model predicting dominance ratings was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient accounted for slightly more variance than the null model. The intercept controlling for average MPC-4 comforting responses was similar to the null model (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *MPC-4 intercept* = 2.150). The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-4 comfort-dominance ratings outcomes was not significant. The average proportion of MPC-4 comfort does not account for any variance in the model.

Additional H2 results (MPC-5). The overall model estimating affiliation ratings was significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient was slightly lower than the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-5 comfort-affiliation ratings outcomes was significant, suggesting that the average proportion of MPC-5 comforting responses has a positive effect on ratings of affiliation across the included conversations. The OLS regression results (Appendix S) also support the observed effect. The intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC-5 comforting responses, slightly decreased which was not in the predicted

direction (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *MPC-5intercept* = 2.472). The average proportion of MPC-5 comfort does not account for any variance in the model.

The overall model estimating dominance ratings was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient was similar to the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-5 comfort-dominance ratings outcomes was not significant, suggesting that the average proportion of MPC-5 comforting responses does not have a significant effect on ratings of dominance across the included conversations. The intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC-5 comforting, slightly increased, opposite predictions (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *MPC-5 intercept* = 2.170). The average proportion of MPC-5comfort does not, however, account for any variance in the model.

Additional H2 results (MPC-6). The overall model estimating affiliation ratings is at conventional significance levels, and the intraclass correlation coefficient is slightly higher than the null model. The intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC-6 comforting, slightly decreased which is not in the predicted direction (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *MPC-6 intercept* = 2.453). The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-6 comfort-affiliation ratings outcomes is significant (one-tailed), suggesting that the average proportion of MPC-6 comforting responses has a negative significant effect on ratings of affiliation across the included conversations. OLS regression results in Appendix S mirror these results. Both analyses reveal MPC-6 has a negative effect on ratings of affiliation, which is not in the predicted direction. The average proportion of MPC-6 comfort does not account for any variance in the model.

The overall model estimating dominance ratings was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient was slightly higher than the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of MPC-6 comfort-dominance ratings outcomes was not significant. The

intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC-6 comforting, slightly increased, which was not in the predicted direction (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *MPC-6 intercept* = 2.187). The average proportion of MPC-6 comfort does not account for any variance in the model.

Additional analyses (MPC-4, MPC-5, MPC-6). I also estimated a combined model for affiliation ratings, including all three proportion variables representing MPC comfort. The combined model was significant, but the intraclass correlation coefficient was lower than the null model. When controlling for all three levels of MPC comfort, only MPC-5 comfort remained significant, revealing similar effects to the individual model estimated. Again, these results are mirrored in the OLS regression results (Appendix S). The intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC comfort, slightly decreased which is not in the predicted direction (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *Combined model intercept* = 2.465). These results largely reveal no support for H2A, with the exception of MPC-5 comfort which has a negligible positive effect on ratings of affiliation. Only in individual analyses does MPC-6 comfort negatively affect affiliation ratings.

The combined model including all levels of MPC comfort and dominance ratings reveals the overall model was not significant. The intraclass correlation coefficient slightly increased from the null model. No coefficients for MPC comfort were significant in predicting dominance ratings. The intercept, controlling for the average proportion of MPC-4, MPC-5, and MPC-6 comfort was slightly higher than the null model intercept, suggesting estimates of average dominance scores slightly increase when controlling for MPC comfort which is not in the predicted direction (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *MPC-6 intercept* = 2.180).

The results of the secondary analyses did not support H2. The MPC-5 comfort coefficient was significant and in the predicted direction of H2, but controlling for MPC-5

comfort decreased (not increased) average affiliation frame ratings. The MPC-6 comfort coefficient was significant but not in the predicted direction, and controlling for MPC-6 comfort also decreased (not increased) average affiliation frame ratings. None of the analyses found support for the effect of MPC-4, MPC-5, and MPC-6 comfort on dominance frame ratings; in these analyses controlling for MPC-5 and MPC-6 comfort slightly increased dominance frame ratings. Tables 4.10 and 4.11 present the results from the additional H2 analyses.

H3 equation. Two models were estimated for H3: Model 3A has the predictor variable of LPC comfort and the outcome variable of affiliation frame ratings; Model 3B has the predictor variable of LPC comfort and the outcome variable of dominance frame ratings for H3. The general equation for the random coefficient model for H3 is:

Level 1 LPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 LPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1j}$;

Combined: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\,\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}$

The same equation is applicable for both outcomes of affiliation framing and dominance framing, represented by the same components as the formulas for HPC comfort and MPC comfort.

H3 results. H3 predicted an increase in LPC comfort is associated with a decrease in turn-level affiliation framing, as well as an increase in turn-level dominance framing. H3 was not supported in the two models testing the two-part hypothesis.

H3A predicted an increase in LPC comfort results in a decrease in the relevancy of affiliation framing. First, the overall model was not significant, while the intraclass correlation coefficient

4.10: HLM Results for Turn-Level Ratings of Affiliation Frame Relevancy, Secondary MPC Analyses

	MPC-4				MPC-5				MPC-6				Combined MPC			
Affiliation	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
MPC-4	0.00	0.00	0.08	.94									0.00	0.00	0.15	.88
MPC-5					0.00	0.00	2.66	.01*					0.00	0.00	1.82	.07±
MPC-6									-0.00	0.00	-1.93	.05±	-0.00	0.00	-0.28	.77
Intercept	2.49	0.08	29.96	.001*	2.47	0.08	32.46	.001*	2.45	0.08	29.49	.001*	2.46	0.08	31.01	.001*
Variance Components																
	var	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.68	0.09			0.63	0.09			0.57	0.08			0.54	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.12	0.08			0.06	0.06			0.11	0.07			0.08	0.06		
MPC-4 u_{1j}	0.00	0.00											0.00	0.00		
MPC-5 u_{2j}					0.00	0.00							0.00	0.00		
MPC-6 u_{3j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
Intraclass correlation coeff. $\hat{\rho}$	0.16	0.08			0.08	0.09			0.17	0.10			0.13	0.10		
Model Fit	Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =0.01, p = .93				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =7.06, p = .01				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =3.74, p = .05				Wald $\chi 2$ (3) =7.35, p = .06			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed p values.± Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) * Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

4.11: HLM Results for Turn-Level Ratings of Dominance Frame Relevancy, H2 Secondary Analyses

	MPC-4				MPC-5				MPC-6				Combined MPC			
Dominance	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
MPC-4	0.00	0.00	0.93	.35									0.00	0.00	0.80	.43
MPC-5					-0.00	0.00	-0.30	.77					0.00	0.00	0.02	.98
MPC-6									0.00	0.00	0.53	.60	0.00	0.00	0.57	.57
Intercept	2.15	0.09	25.29	.001*	2.17	0.08	25.81	.001	2.19	0.09	25.34	.001*	2.18	0.08	26.14	.001*
Variance Components																
	var	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.65	0.08			0.59	0.09			0.58	0.09			0.53	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.14	0.07			0.11	0.07			0.12	0.07			0.10	0.07		
MPC-4 u_{1j}	0.00	0.00											0.00	0.00		
MPC-5 u_{2j}					0.00	0.00							0.00	0.00		
MPC-6 u_{3j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
Intraclass correlation coeff. $\hat{\rho}$	0.18	0.09			0.16	0.09			0.17	0.09			0.16	0.09		
Model Fit	Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =0.86, p = .35				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =0.09, p = .77				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =0.28, p = .60				Wald $\chi 2$ (3) =1.01, p = .80			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed p values.$^{\pm}$ Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) * Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

increased only slightly. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level affiliation rating, controlling for the average proportion of LPC comfort. Accounting for LPC comfort across all conversations results in only a small change in the intercept; this change is not in line with theoretical predictions as the intercept value slightly increases, not decreases, when controlling for LPC comfort (*Null intercept* = 2.484; *2A intercept* = 2.494). The coefficient representing the average slope of LPC comfort-affiliation ratings outcomes was not significant, which suggests that the average proportion of LPC comfort does not have a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversation. Additionally, the average proportion of LPC comfort does not account for any variance in the model. H3A was not supported.

H3B predicted an increase in LPC comfort results in an increase in the relevancy of dominance framing. First, the overall model was significant, but the intraclass correlation coefficient suggests little variance is accounted for when controlling for LPC comfort. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level dominance rating, controlling for the average proportion of LPC comfort. The intercept remains the same as the null model (*Null intercept* = 2.156; *3B intercept* = 2.156). Controlling for average proportion of LPC comfort does not influence turn-level dominance ratings. The coefficient representing the average slope of LPC comfort-dominance ratings outcomes is not significant, suggesting that the average proportion of LPC comfort does not have a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversations. Additionally, the average proportion of LPC comfort does not account for any variance in the model. H3B was not supported.

RQ3 equation. RQ3 proposed a combined model, resulting in some changes to the random coefficient equation. Two models were estimated: For RQ3A, the outcome (Y_{ij}) is affiliation turn-level ratings and for RQ3B, the outcome (Y_{ij}) is dominance turn-level ratings.

Level 1 HPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{HPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 HPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1j}$;

Level 1 MPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{2j}\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 MPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \mu_{2j}$;

Level 1 LPC: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{3j}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2 LPC: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30} + \mu_{3j}$;

Combined: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\,\text{HPCRatioC}_{ij} + \gamma_{20}\,\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + \gamma_{30}\,\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + \mu_{0j} + \mu_{1j} + \mu_{2j} + \mu_{3j} + r_{ij}$

The combined equation captures (a) the average frame rating across the population of conversations (γ_{00}); (b) the average HPC-frame regression slope across conversations (γ_{10}); the average MPC-frame regression slope (γ_{20}); the average LPC-frame regression slope (γ_{30}); (c) the residual or conditional variance when controlling for conversation *j* (μ_{0j}); (d) the unique increment accounting for the *slopes* associated with conversation *j* ($\mu_{1j;}\mu_{2j;}\mu_{3j}$)*;* and (e) the random error associated with the *i*th turn in the *j*th conversation (r_{ij}). The results are presented with Table 4.12 (Affiliation) and Table 4.13 (Dominance), alongside H4, H5, and RQ4.

RQ3 results. First, predicting affiliation ratings, the overall model was at conventional guidelines for statistical significance ($p = .05$). There was an increase in the intraclass

correlation coefficient compared to the null model, suggesting a slight increase in the variance accounted for in the current model (.15 to .18). Similar to the individual models, no individual coefficients were statistically supported. Controlling for the quality of all VPC comfort – the average LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort offered in a turn – results in a slight decrease in the average affiliation score, and VPC comfort does not account for variance in the model.

Next, predicting dominance ratings, the overall model was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient slightly decreased compared to the null model. While the coefficient for HPC comfort was significant in the individual model for H1, the coefficient is no longer significant when controlling for all VPC comforting quality. Additionally, controlling for the quality of all VPC comfort did not change the intercept value. VPC comfort does not account for variance in the model.

The exploration of the third research question reveals that controlling for the proportion of VPC comforting quality results in a slight decrease of the average affiliation rating, but there was no change to the average dominance rating, and no random coefficients are statistically supported. There remains a large amount of variance unaccounted for in both models; the conversation-level predictor variables may account for some of this variance.

Slopes and intercepts as outcomes (H4, RQ4). The HLM models estimated for H4 and RQ4 recognize that stressor severity and conversation-level frame ratings vary by conversation and may account for variation in the average frame relevancy ratings for conversational turns (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). The slopes-as-outcomes models allow slopes for each conversation to vary, instead of treating level-2 conversational characteristics as fixed effects. Hypothesis testing is based on the coefficients representing slopes.

H4 equation. The equation for H4 emphasizes that only a level-2 variable representing stressor severity is included:

Equation: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\,\text{StressorSev}_j + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}$

The components of the equation include (a) the average frame rating across the population of conversations (γ_{00}); (b) the average stressor severity-frame regression *slope* across conversations (γ_{10}); (c) the unique increment to the *intercept* associated with conversation *j* (μ_{0j}); and (e) the random error associated with the *i*th turn in the *j*th conversation (r_{ij}). Two models were estimated. The first model predicted the outcome variable of affiliation ratings (4A), and the second model predicted the outcome variable of dominance ratings (4B).

H4 results. H4 predicted that as stressor severity increases so too does affiliation frame relevancy, while dominance frame relevancy will decrease as stressor severity increases. H4 was partially supported.

H4A predicted that the discussion of more serious stressors increases the relevancy of affiliation frame ratings. First, the overall model was not significant, and the intaclass correlation coefficient was lower compared to the null model. The coefficient representing stressor severity-affiliation rating outcomes was not significant, suggesting that stressor severity does have a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversations. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level affiliation rating, controlling for stressor severity. Controlling for stressor severity slightly decreases, not increases, the average rating of affiliation. Controlling for stressor severity does not account for any variance in the model. H4A was not supported.

H4B predicted that the discussion of more serious stressors decreases dominance frame ratings. First, the overall model was not significant, and the intraclass correlation coefficient

decreased slightly compared to the null model. The negative coefficient representing stressor severity was also significant in the predicted direction when accepting one-tailed tests of significance, which means that the average slope of stressor severity-dominance rating outcomes has a significant effect on different ratings of dominance across the included conversations; discussing more severe stressors has a negative effect on dominance turn-level ratings. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level dominance rating, controlling for stressor severity, which slightly increased grand mean estimates. Stressor severity does not, however, account for variance in the model. H4B was partially supported, based on the coefficient significance test.

H5 equation. H5 differs from the prior analyses. In H5, the predictor variable is the turn-level affiliation frame ratings, and the conversation-level frame ratings are the dependent variable. To estimate these models, I first averaged all affiliation frame ratings and dominance frame ratings for each of the 59 conversations with relational meaning turns, and then I estimated these models using OLS regression. The OLS regression equations are:

Affiliation (Conversation): $Y = \alpha + \beta \text{AvgAffilTurnScore}_i + \varepsilon_i$

Dominance (Conversation): $Y = \alpha + \beta \text{AvgDomTurnScore}_i + \varepsilon_i$

H5 results. H5 predicted that turn ratings of affiliation would influence conversation ratings of affiliation, while turn ratings of dominance would influence conversation ratings of dominance. H5 was not supported.

The results of the model for conversation-level affiliation ratings reveals the overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 2.36, p = .13, with poor model fit, adjusted R^2 = .02. The coefficient for the average turn-level ratings of affiliation was not significant, t (57) = 1.54, p =

.13, b = .20, β = .20. There was no effect for the average turn-level ratings of affiliation on conversation-level ratings of affiliation.

The results of the model for conversation-level dominance ratings reveals the overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 0.77, p = .38, with poor model fit, adjusted R^2 = .00. The coefficient for the average turn-level ratings of dominance was not significant, t (57) = 0.88, p = .38, b = .13, β = .12. There was no effect for the average turn-level ratings of dominance on conversation-level ratings of dominance.

Alternative analyses for H5. Due to the design of the study where conversation ratings were collected first and turn-level ratings were collected second,[20] I also tested an alternative model for H5 where conversation-level frame relevancy ratings predict the corresponding turn-level frame relevancy ratings.

The alternative analyses for H5 incorporate a similar equation to H4 (stressor severity), where the role of conversation-level (level-2) support recipient framing impacts turn-level frame ratings:

Affiliation: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\,\text{ReceiverAffilRatingCentered}_j + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}$

Dominance: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}\,\text{ReceiverDomRatingCentered}_j + \mu_{0j} + r_{ij}$

Two equations are provided because different ratings of conversation-level framing are used in the analyses. First, to predict turn-level affiliation ratings, the support receiver affiliation ratings are included. Second, support receiver dominance ratings are used to predict turn-level dominance ratings. Again, two models were estimated, one for each equation.

[20] The decision to have participants complete scaled post-conversation measures before viewing and rating the conversation was due to the time it took to have the video recording sync across the two computers housed in two separate areas of the laboratory (support provider / support receiver). Our research participants were allocated credits based on the time spent completing the study. Reversing the order to have participants first view the conversation and then complete scaled measures would have resulted in the participants sitting and waiting on the file to sync, impacting the credits granted for the study and the subsequent appointment schedules.

H5 additional analyses results. The first alternative model predicted conversation-level ratings of affiliation would be associated with turn-level ratings of affiliation. The results of the affiliation model do not support the alternative perspective where conversation-level ratings of affiliation influence turn-level ratings of affiliation. The coefficient representing frame relevancy ratings was not significant, suggesting that conversation ratings of affiliation do not have a significant effect on different turn-level ratings of affiliation across all conversations. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level affiliation rating, controlling for conversation-level affiliation ratings. Controlling for conversation-level affiliation ratings, the average turn-level affiliation rating was similar to the null model. Conversation ratings of affiliation do not account for any variance in the alternative model.

The second alternative model predicted the average dominance frame ratings at the conversation level would be associated with average dominance ratings at the turn level. The coefficient representing conversation level ratings of dominance was not significant, suggesting that conversation ratings of dominance do not have a significant effect on different ratings of dominance across all conversations. The intercept of this model represents the average turn-level dominance rating, controlling for conversation-level dominance ratings. The intercept remained similar to the null model. Dominance ratings at the conversation level did account for a small amount of variance. In both the preliminary and alternative analyses, no support for H5 was found.

RQ4. To explore RQ4, HLM estimations included both level-1 variables and level-2 variables. While the analyses of H5 did not reveal an association between turn-level frame relevancy ratings and conversation-level frame relevancy ratings, I included the level-2 conversation framing ratings in RQ4. The equation for the combined model is:

Level 1: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + \beta_{2j}\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + \beta_{3j}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + r_{ij}$

Level 2: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \mu_{0j}$;

$\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \mu_{1j}$

$\beta_{2j} = \gamma_{20} + \mu_{2j}$

$\beta_{3j} = \gamma_{30} + \mu_{3j}$

$\beta_{4j} = \gamma_{40} + \gamma_{41}\,\text{StressorSeverity}_j + \mu_{4j}$;

$\beta_{5j} = \gamma_{50} + \gamma_{51}\,\text{ReceiverAffilRatingCentered}_j + \mu_{5j}$;

$\beta_{6j} = \gamma_{60} + \gamma_{61}\,\text{ReceiverDomRatingCentered}_j + \mu_{6j}$;

Combined: $Y_{ij} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{10}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij} + \gamma_{20}\text{MPCRatioC}_{ij} + \gamma_{30}\text{LPCRatioC}_{ij}$

$+ \gamma_{41}\,\text{StressorSeverity}_j + \gamma_{51}\,\text{ReceiverAffilRatingCentered}_j$

$+ \gamma_{61}\,\text{ReceiverDomRatingCentered}_j + \mu_{1j} + \mu_{2j} + \mu_{3j} + \mu_{4j} + \mu_{5j} + \mu_{6j} + r_{ij}$

There were two models estimated for the separate dependent variables. The first model estimated affiliation ratings, while the second model estimated dominance ratings. Table 4.12 summarizes the results for affiliation ratings and Table 4.13 summarizes the results for dominance ratings, presented alongside the results for H4, the alternative H5 analyses, and the RQ3 analyses.

Focusing first on the final model estimated for affiliation ratings, there are some interesting patterns that emerge when controlling for all level-1 and level-2 predictors. First, the overall model was at conventional thresholds for significance (p = .05), but the intraclass correlation coefficient decreased compared to the null model. The coefficient representing the average slope of stressor severity-affiliation ratings outcomes was significant; the coefficient suggests that stressor severity, while controlling for other level-1 and level-2 predictors, has a significant effect on different ratings of affiliation across the included conversations.

Interestingly, the coefficient representing conversation-level affiliation ratings was also significant when accepting a one-tailed significance test; only when controlling for the other level-1 and level-2 predictors was the average slope of conversation affiliation ratings-turn level affiliation ratings statistically significant across all conversations. These results suggest that VPC comfort does not produce statistically supported regression slopes in the various conversations. When accounting for the average proportion of VPC comfort offered in a turn, the severity of the problem discussed in the conversation, and average conversation-level affiliation framing ratings, the average turn-level affiliation ratings are lower compared to the null model (*null intercept* = 2.48; *RQ4 model intercept* = 2.37). The level-1 and level-2 predictors did not account for variance in the combined model.

Examining the final model estimated for dominance ratings, the overall model was not significant. Additionally, the intraclass correlation coefficient decreases with all level-1 and level-2 predictors. The negative coefficient for stressor severity was significant, suggesting the average slope of stressor severity-dominance ratings varies across conversations when controlling for the other predictor variables. The coefficient for conversation-level ratings of dominance was not significant when controlling for VPC comfort and stressor severity. In the combined model, the coefficients for VPC comfort were not statistically significant, similar to the analyses for RQ3. Controlling for all level-1 and level-2 predictors increased the intercept, representing the average dominance rating at the turn level decreased compared to the null model.

The two intercepts estimating average affiliation ratings and average dominance ratings reached similar levels when including all predictor variables (2.29 versus 2.33). The coefficient for stressor severity remains significant in the predicted directions in both models, suggesting

4.12: HLM Results for Turn-Level Ratings of Affiliation Frame Relevancy, H4-H5 and RQs

	H4				H5				RQ3				RQ4			
Affiliation	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*se*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
LPC									0.01	0.03	0.32	.74	0.00	0.03	0.26	.80
MPC									0.01	0.03	0.41	.68	0.01	0.03	0.34	.74
HPC									0.02	0.00	0.56	.57	0.02	0.03	0.50	.62
Stressor severity	0.24	0.16	1.48	.14									0.40	0.16	2.56	.01*
Conversation Framing					0.18	0.11	1.53	.13					0.21	0.11	1.82	.07±
Intercept	2.36	0.11	20.70	.001*	2.49	0.08	30.39	.001*	2.44	0.11	21.51	.001*	2.29	0.11	20.97	.001*
Variance Components																
	var	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*			*var*	*SE*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.69	0.07			0.69	0.09			0.62	7.26			0.68	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.11	0.07			0.11	0.07			0.14	2.94			0.09	0.06		
LPC u_{1j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
MPC u_{2j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
HPC u_{3j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
Stressor severity u_{4j}	0.00	0.00											0.00	0.00		
Conversation Framing u_{5j}					0.00	0.00							0.00	0.00		
Intraclass correlation coefficient $\hat{\rho}$	0.13	0.08			0.14	0.08			0.18	0.10			0.11	0.07		
Model Fit	Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =2.20, p = .14				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =2.33, p = .13				Wald $\chi 2$ (3) =9.56, p = .04				Wald $\chi 2$ (5) =11.23, p = .05			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed p values. ± Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) * Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

Table 4.13: HLM Results for Turn-Level Ratings of Dominance Frame Relevancy, H4-H5 and RQs

	H4				H5				RQ3				RQ4			
Dominance	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*SE*	*z*	*p*
Coefficients																
LPC									0.00	0.03	0.15	.88	0.01	0.03	0.30	.77
MPC									0.00	0.03	0.09	.93	0.01	0.03	0.23	.82
HPC									-0.00	0.03	-0.21	.84	-0.00	0.03	-0.06	.95
Stressor severity	-0.27	0.16	-1.69	.09$^{\pm}$									-0.33	0.16	-2.10	.04*
Conversation Framing					-0.03	0.11	-0.31	.76					-0.01	0.10	-0.06	.95
Intercept	2.29	0.11	20.24	.001*	2.15	0.08	25.58	.001*	2.16	0.08	26.31	.001*	2.33	0.11	21.93	.001*
Variance Components																
Residual r_{ij}	0.68	0.08			0.68	0.09			0.64	0.08			0.63	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.11	0.08			0.09	0.08			0.10	0.07			0.03	0.08		
LPC u_{1j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
MPC u_{2j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
HPC u_{3j}									0.00	0.00			0.00	0.00		
Stressor severity u_{4j}	0.00	0.00											0.06	0.12		
Conversation Framing u_{5j}					0.04	0.09							0.06	0.12		
Intraclass correlation coefficient $\hat{\rho}$	0.14	0.09			0.12	0.09			0.14	0.09			0.04	0.12		
Model Fit	Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =2.86, p = .09				Wald $\chi 2$ (1) =0.10, p = .76				Wald $\chi 2$ (3) =5.05, p = .17				Wald $\chi 2$ (5) =8.36, p = .21			

Notes: Table presents two-tailed p values.$^{\pm}$ Significant at $p < .10$ (in predicted direction) * Significant at $p < .05$ (two tailed).

stressor severity impacts turn-level relational framing. The coefficient for conversation-level affiliation framing is significant (one-tailed) only in the combined model predicting affiliation ratings, suggesting that when accounting for VPC comfort and stressor severity, conversation-level affiliation framing impacts turn-level affiliation framing. In contrast, the coefficient for conversation-level dominance framing did not impact turn-level dominance framing. The exploration of RQ4 revealed the importance of stressor severity on both outcomes representing turn-level relational frame relevancy, and revealed the association between relational framing at two levels of abstraction which was not observed in the individual analyses.

Discussion

The current study focused on the relational framing of comforting communication in supportive conversations. Drawing from Relational Framing Theory, I developed four research questions and five hypotheses to investigate the impact of VPC comforting communication on the frames of affiliation-disaffiliation and dominance-submissiveness at the level of the supportive conversation turn as well as the episodic level of the supportive conversation. I now discuss the research questions and hypotheses, followed by a discussion of the impact of these findings on Relational Framing Theory and Person Centered Theory, while acknowledging the limitations of the current study and the ways in which future research should address these limitations. I conclude by acknowledging how the theoretical postulates from Chapter 2 were tested in the current study.

Relational Meaning in Supportive Conversation Turns

The first research question explored how responses to the question, "What did your partner mean?" explicitly represented content meaning or relational meaning. The descriptive results provide some insight into the process of explicitly acknowledging relational meaning.

On average, support recipients responded to approximately 10 turns per conversation, with only a small proportion (20%) of these responses explicitly referencing relational meaning. Some responses explicitly acknowledged the relational history and the relationship shared with the support provider, capturing the conceptual definition of relational meaning (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Relational meaning responses recognize that friends are experts on other friends (Planalp & Garvin-Doxas, 1994), because of the shared knowledge and history referenced in these statements. Because relational meaning in this study captures interpretations, other relational meaning responses highlighted the intended action of supportive communication in conversations between friends – that is, responses recognized that what their friend said was "produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (MacGeorge et al., 2011, p. 317), in line with definitions of supportive communication. These friendships are relationships where one friend says something to express understanding, comfort, and reassurance, and the other friend acknowledges the desire of their friend to help assist and aid. Support providers may have been primed to mention specific words because scaled evaluative measures administered in the post-conversation procedures prior to these responses featured the terms *understanding*, *encouraging*, *comforting*, *reassuring*, *helpful*, and *knowledgeable* (Goldsmith et al., 2000). While different interpretations of relational meaning, supportive responses and responses emphasizing shared relational history both recognize the friendships included in the current study are perceived as supportive contexts.

The majority of written responses reported on the content of supportive turns. These statements were brief as the verbal actions of the support provider were simply restated (e.g., asking a question, asking for clarification, telling a similar story, telling me it will be okay). While the procedures had a separate question that asked about intention ("What was your friend

trying to accomplish with this statement?"), some responses still focused on explaining the intended actions of a supportive conversational turn.

When asked about meaning, without being primed to think about a particular representation of meaning, support recipients focused on explaining and describing the verbal actions of the support provider, versus focusing on interpretations and implications of statements for the relationship. If the identification of relational meaning in verbal and nonverbal cues activates relational frames to aid in interpretation, then these results should be further investigated to determine what happens when support recipients are asked to respond to content meaning and relational meaning prompts separately.

The Relational Meaning of VPC Comfort

The majority of conversational turns were moderately person centered. When engaged in supportive conversations with friends, support providers primarily focus on offering distractions, providing non-feeling centered information about upsetting events, or responding with generic statements. Questions, reflections, and statements focusing on the event may be perceived as attempts to gain understanding of the upsetting event and, in turn, understanding of another person's emotions. Support providers implicitly acknowledge feelings of upset through general statements expressing sympathy, represented in the frequency of MPC comfort. HPC comfort and LPC comfort were less frequently offered by support providers. When providing comfort, the friends in the current corpus of conversations did not frequently criticize, condemn, or disregard the feelings of their friend. Nor did support providers explicitly acknowledge feelings or engage in perspective taking. These results mirror findings by Metts, Backhaus, and Kazoleas (1995, February) who found more sophisticated comforting messages expressing sympathy and emotional validation were relatively infrequent while ritualized expressions of appreciation ("Oh

dear"; "That's too bad") were more frequent. The quality of VPC comfort in a supportive turn was only weakly associated with the type of meaning attributed to the comforting communication. The VPC comforting quality had some predictive power in determining if responses were coded as relational meaning, but these predicted probabilities were similar to chance levels of prediction (e.g., .50). Based on these results, VPC comforting alone does not predict the type of relational meaning attributed to conversational turns.

HPC Comfort and Relational Frames

The first hypothesis which predicted that HPC comfort would increase the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame but decrease the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame was not fully supported. Only partial support was found for HPC comfort and dominance ratings. When HPC comfort was more prevalent (above average levels) in a conversational turn, there was a corresponding decrease in the relevance of the dominance frame, observed in the main analyses as well as the OLS regression analyses (see Appendix S). This effect was not observed, however, when controlling for the proportion of all VPC comfort in conversational turns. These results suggest that when a greater proportion of HPC comfort occurs, the relational frame of dominance-submissiveness is less relevant. One reason why the predicted effects were not observed for predictions about the affiliation frame may be because conversation-level evaluations of frames suggested the affiliation-disaffiliation frame was more relevant for all conversations. Perhaps only moderate increases in HPC comfort lessen the dominance frame, but it takes large increases in HPC comfort to increase the already highly salient dominant affiliation frame.

MPC Comfort and Relational Frames

The second hypothesis predicted that MPC comfort would increase the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame but decrease the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame. H2 was not supported. In the primary analyses, the average proportion of MPC comfort did not impact frame relevancy for either the affiliation frame or the dominance frame.

Recognizing the relative frequency of MPC comfort compared to LPC comfort and HPC comfort (RQ2), I also examined the sub-levels of MPC comfort separately. When treated as a separate predictor of affiliation frame relevancy, content-based explanations, statements, and questions in MPC-6 comforting responses have a negative effect on affiliation frame relevancy but not on dominance frame relevancy. This association is observed only in the individual models, not in the models combining the proportions of MPC comfort. Using the example transcript in Appendix N, MPC-6 comforting responses include questions about the situation (*"How long did she have it?"* inquiring about how long a grandmother had been diagnosed with cancer), statements related to the situation (*"That's pretty recent,"* about the length of time since the grandmother had passed away), and content-focused explanations (*"They just didn't know,"* regarding how long the grandmother would live after the diagnosis). When relational meaning is inferred from MPC-6 comforting responses, the affiliation frame may be less relevant because comforting responses focus on aspects related to the stressor rather than the emotions experienced by the support recipient. When support providers focus on non-feeling-centered information, support recipients may not evaluate these actions as particularly affiliative or concerned with social connection.

MPC-5 comforting responses, representing nonspecific acknowledgements and generalized expressions of reassurance, have a small positive effect on affiliation frame ratings.

The effect of MPC-5 comfort remained significant (one-tailed) in the combined model predicting affiliation frame relevancy. These patterns were only observed for affiliation frame relevancy. Returning to the example transcript in Appendix N, MPC-5 include implicit recognition of feelings ("It is," said after the support recipient says "It's just sad"), along with general acknowledgements of the support recipient's feelings and interpretations (*"I don't either,"* responding to the support recipient who says she does not handle death well). While not always captured in the conversational turns evaluated in the analyses, MPC-5 responses also include ritualized expressions (*"Oh no,"* responding to the support recipient's comment that her grandmother's cancer returned). When relational meaning is inferred from MPC-5 comforting responses, these responses likely positively impact the relevancy of affiliation framing because MPC-5 comforting responses demonstrate, to some degree, affiliation and involvement in a relational partner's emotional experiences. These results help to further illustrate how variations within MPC comfort impact the relevancy of relational frames, even if the results do not directly support the predictions made in H2.

LPC Comfort and Relational Frames

The third hypothesis which predicted that LPC comfort would increase the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame but decrease the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, was not supported. I estimated models predicting turn-level ratings of affiliation-disaffiliation frame relevancy utilizing both HLM techniques (grouping turns within their respective conversations) and OLS techniques. LPC comfort is consistently evaluated as less sensitive and appropriate than MPC comfort or HPC comfort (Bodie et al., 2012; Burleson & Samter, 1985a). The predicted pattern was observed in Study 1, but the effect of LPC comfort

on turn-level relational frames may not be as noticeable due to the relative infrequency at which LPC comfort was offered in the current supportive conversations.

Stressor Severity and Relational Frames

The fourth hypothesis predicted discussing more severe stressors would increase the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, but decrease the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame. There was partial support found for the fourth hypothesis. In the individual model predicted by H4, stressor severity impacted dominance ratings suggesting that discussing more severe stressors reduces the relevancy of the dominance frame. This pattern remained even when controlling for other predictors in RQ4. For affiliation frame relevancy, stressor severity impacted affiliation frame ratings not in the individual analyses conducted for H4 but in the combined model estimated for RQ4. When controlling for VPC comfort and conversation-level affiliation relational framing, discussing more serious problems has a positive impact on turn-level affiliation framing. There is some support that discussing more severe problems impacts relational framing. Combined with the results from Study 1 where main effects for stressor severity were observed for four relational effect variables, these findings suggest stressor severity may impact how relational meaning is processed by support recipients.

Conversation Relational Framing and Turn-Level Relational Framing

The fifth hypothesis predicted the increased relevancy of relational frames as rated by the support receiver at the turn level should influence conversation ratings of frame relevancy, such that turn-level affiliation framing will positively impact conversation-level affiliation ratings and turn-level dominance framing will positively impact conversation-level dominance ratings. For all models estimated, turn-level ratings of dominance were not impacted by conversation-level ratings of dominance. While the individual models did not support H5, when conversation

framing was included in the models estimated for RQ4, the conversation-level ratings of affiliation had a positive impact on turn-level ratings of affiliation, even when controlling for VPC comfort and stressor severity.

One reason for these results may be due to the differences in coded responses compared to support receiver evaluations in the preliminary results. Across all conversational turns, ratings of frame relevancy were greater for the affiliation frame compared to dominance frame. Similarly, ratings of frame relevancy were greater for conversation-level ratings compared to the dominance frame. These measures were not associated; while a similar pattern emerged due to the expression of meaning captured in the turn-level responses, these coded ratings shared no association with the support receiver's evaluations of the conversation.

Combined Models

The final research question examined the influence of VPC comforting quality, conversation-level framing, and stressor severity on ratings of frame relevancy for conversational turns where relational meaning was interpreted. When controlling for all factors, VPC comforting quality did not impact frame ratings. Comparing the final models to the null models revealed that the null models actually accounted for more variance than the models including all predictors, suggesting both that the conversations account for only a small proportion of variance in relational framing. Furthermore, VPC comfort, stressor severity, and conversation-level relational framing did not capture variance in relational frame ratings. With a large amount of variance unaccounted for, there may be other factors which better account for the saliency of relational frames. In total, there were twenty-four models presented in the primary HLM analyses of which three overall models were significant and one approached significance, suggesting concerns of model fit.

An interesting pattern emerges in the model intercepts, which represent the estimate of the grand mean controlling for the factors included in the respective model. Starting with the null affiliation model, intercept values were similar for many models except for the decreases observed when modeling H4 (stressor severity) and RQ4 (combined model). Controlling for stressor severity and all included factors decreased the average turn-level affiliation score. For ratings of dominance, similar patterns emerged where controlling for stressor severity and all factors estimated in RQ4 increased average turn-level ratings. While the contributions of these factors were observed in the intercepts, the factors did not account for significant amounts of variance in the model, again supporting the need for further inquiry about how VPC comfort, stressor severity, and differing levels of abstraction influence relational framing judgments.

Contributions to Person Centered Theory

The results of the current study contribute to Person Centered Theory, particularly by situating VPC comfort in supportive conversational turns and further exploring the relational effects of VPC comfort. HPC comfort explicitly acknowledging and elaborating on a friend's feelings and emotions was relatively rare, similar to the findings of Metts et al. (1995, February). These results are important for PCT as the Metts et al. (1995, February) study did not directly conceptualize and operationalize supportive communication as VPC comfort. LPC comfort denying and criticizing a friend's feelings and emotions was also relatively rare, suggesting that friends may not often explicitly condemn or criticize a friend's experiences. While the person-centered hierarchy was represented in these responses, comforting communication capturing moderately person-centered responses were more common. Further, relational meaning judgments occur when friends offer VPC comfort; based on the current results, however, further

research is needed to determine if (and which) qualities of VPC comfort invoke explicit relational meaning.

Recognizing the frequency of MPC comfort offered in these conversations, there may be differences within MPC comfort that impact instrumental, identity, and relational effects. Future research may consider examining relational meaning within the levels of MPC comfort (e.g., MPC-4, MPC-5, and MPC-6). When examined individually, MPC-5 had a slight positive influence on affiliation ratings, suggesting that nonspecific acknowledgements (e.g, "I'm sorry"; "That sucks") and general backchannel cues (i.e., "Mmhm") should be viewed positively in supportive conversations. In contrast, MPC-6 had a negative impact on affiliation rating; non-feeling-centered explanations and statements focusing on the event – not the emotions – may not be as affiliative as other ways to respond in conversations. As conversations were primarily viewed through affiliative frames, non-feeling-centered explanations decrease the relevancy of affiliation perhaps because these responses focus on events, rather than the emotions a friend is experiencing. If these patterns are observed in relational evaluations, then similar patterns may be observed for instrumental and identity effects.

HPC comfort is typically presented as formally better and functionally better comfort (Burleson & Samter, 1985a). In the current study, there was some evidence to suggest that HPC comfort (above average levels) results in a decrease in dominance ratings. The results of both studies suggest supportive conversations are primarily evaluated through the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, in line with the pro-social intentions of comforting communication (Burleson, 1984a). These findings suggest that offering more HPC comfort could help with effective relational meaning processing because it further reduces the relevancy of the dominance frame. In this perspective, one of the ways HPC comfort is functionally better is that

receiving HPC comfort helps to reduce the relevancy of the competing relational frame, in line with the differential salience hypothesis.

Contributions to Relational Framing Theory

Similar to Study 1, Study 2 provides continued evidence that supportive conversations are primarily viewed and interpreted through the affiliation frame. Study 2 provides evidence that this pattern occurs in face-to-face conversations, in addition to the written representations of conversations presented in Study 1. Recognizing the various factors impacting framing judgments, including individual differences (Solomon et al., 2002), dominance frames are still somewhat relevant for understanding and framing the supportive actions of friends.

RFT predicts features of interactions activate relational frames (Solomon & McLaren, 2008). The results suggest discussing more severe stressors in conversations may be particularly important in the processing of relational meaning. When engaged in conversations about more severe problems, support recipients may be particularly attuned to the relational implications of supportive communication when determining the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame. RFT acknowledges features of an episode invoke relational frames (McLaren & Solomon, 2015); in this case, it may not only be the type of conversation (e.g., episode) which invokes relational frames and subsequent processing, but also features of the talk contained in conversation. McLaren et al. (2014) found utterances expressing either cooperative or competitive features of utterances are related to relational framing; my study reveals that variation within a single construct (e.g., severity) is related to relational framing. Furthermore, my findings illustrate and substantiate the differential salience hypothesis as greater amounts of HPC comfort reduced the relevancy of the dominance frame. Even when episodes are primarily

framed through one frame (e.g., affiliation), message characteristics may further reduce the relevancy of the displaced frame (e.g., dominance).

While one goal of the current study was to explore the relationship between episodic-levels of relational framing and utterance-levels of framing, the results suggest further research is needed in this area. The current contributions to this aspect of RFT revealed that when controlling for VPC comfort and stressor severity, above-average levels of conversation affiliation framing are positively associated with turn-level ratings of affiliation. Recognizing the differences in coded responses versus scaled responses, these results are promising for uniting and studying relational framing at different levels of abstraction.

Additionally, Study 2 provides some evidence that observers can determine the relevancy of relational frames based on written accounts of meaning. Relational frames are posited to be innate mental structures (Dillard et al., 1996), which provides the initial grounds for coding relational framing responses, recognizing those responses which explicitly acknowledge relational meaning should reflect the central themes of social control and social closeness. The coded responses revealed similar patterns to support receiver responses such that affiliation framing was more relevant than dominance framing. Coded representations of framing still varied, but outside judgments were coded from the written content of responses explicating relational meaning, which only represent how others processed meaning in a face-to-face conversation with visual and verbal acts of meaning (Bavelas & Chovil, 2000, 2006; Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2002). Relational framing at the conversation level, as well as written responses reflecting relational meaning both were made in a rich context with more situational environmental cues available compared to the coded process representing relational meaning and relational framing.

Finally, this study presents intriguing insight into the process of relational meaning. As RFT captures cognitive processes (McLaren & Solomon, 2015), the study of relational framing relies on reflections and evaluations of these processes, typically through scaled measures (Dillard & Solomon, 2005). In the current study, I looked at the implied process leading to framing judgments – namely, there must first be the identification of relational meaning so people activate relational frames to understand and effectively process relational meaning through these cognitive structures. Distinguishing that identification presumably occurs before activation and evaluation adds nuance to the process of relational meaning. Future research in this area, using questions focusing on relational meaning, should add to RFT and the understanding of how relational meaning is interpreted and evaluated. The cognitive process of activation and evaluation should be relatively rapid as McLaren et al. (2014) argued, but there are other ways to have people reflect on the cognitive processes which lead to judgments of frame relevancy. Focusing on different aspects of the process may better reveal how features of the episode or utterance invoke relational meaning and framing judgments.

Limitations

One limitation of the current study is that I did not explicitly ask participants to state the relational meaning of conversational turns, nor did participants provide their own ratings of frame relevancy at the level of the conversational turn. This limitation is attributed to the decision to re-examine a data set which had conversation-level ratings of frame relevancy coupled with turn-level evaluations of meaning. Decisions in coding relational meaning and relational frames were still theoretically derived, but may account for observed associations between conversation-level judgments made by support receivers and coded relational frame judgments. Because of this limitation, there may be other level-2 (conversation) predictors which account for variation in VPC comfort and relational framing judgments. HLM permits

cross-level interactions between level-1 and level-2 variables. If the outcome variables were the *support recipient* framing ratings, then perceived closeness may moderate the framing of VPC comforting quality. The dual-process model of supportive outcomes recognizes that closeness moderates evaluations of comforting communication (Bodie, 2013a; Holmstrom et al., 2015), however, the outcome variables represent observer judgments of the written content of relational meaning responses. The observers evaluated the written content of relational meaning responses, without referring to the VPC comforting quality of the support provider's conversational contribution. Furthermore, observers were not part of the friendship dyad, so judgments of framing should not be influenced by perceived closeness. Based on the results, a different study design where relationship qualities are included may account for variance in the ratings.

Another limitation is the representation of both visual and verbal acts of meaning and how visual and verbal acts influence the relational meaning process. While support providers engaged in the supportive conversation and then watched a recording of the conversation featuring visual and verbal acts of meaning, the coding of person-centeredness and the coding of relational meaning both relied on written transcripts. In RFT, ambiguous cues trigger the relational framing process (McLaren & Solomon, 2015); the support provider responses of meaning and conversation-level ratings of frame relevancy may have been based on visual cues as well as verbal cues. The coded meaning and observer rated frame relevancy judgments did not have these same verbal cues available in determining rating.

The sample size could be viewed as a potential limitation. I could not, however, determine in advance which conversations and responses would emphasize relational meaning. With 849 responses, I could not control that only 20% of responses would emphasize relational meaning and subsequently be coded for frame relevancy. I countered this limitation by testing

additional OLS regression models for H1-H3 where responses were not grouped within conversations; these models were also adequately powered to detect large effects but underpowered for small effects.

Conclusion

Study 2 focused on the relational meaning of emotional support enacted in supportive conversations (Postulate 1), recognizing that enacted emotional support produces relational effects (Postulate 2) and embodies relational meaning (Postulate 3). Relational Framing Theory was utilized to represent relational evaluations, but other representations of relational meaning were also captured. I posed research questions and hypotheses to determine how the quality of person-centered comfort affects relational framing judgments. Relational frame relevancy was tested at the level of the conversation turn, as well as at the level of the conversation. These results suggest stressor severity impacts relational framing, as well as greater proportions of HPC comfort. Similar to Study 1, supportive conversations are primarily evaluated through the affiliation frame, and there are factors including stressor severity and HPC comfort which further reduce the relevancy of dominance framing.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overall discussion of the theoretical postulates from Chapter 2, integrating the hypotheses, research questions, and results of the two studies presented in Chapters 3 (Study 1) and 4 (Study 2). I begin by reviewing the theoretical postulates introduced in Chapter 2 and how the postulates informed my research questions, hypotheses, and study design. I also discuss how the theoretical postulates can inform future research in supportive communication. After discussing each theoretical postulate, I preview how the theoretical postulates will inform my planned program of research aimed at exploring how the verbal and nonverbal actions embodied in supportive communication impact the development, maintenance, and termination of (un)supportive relationships. I conclude by returning to the themes I introduced in Chapter 1, summarizing the theoretical and practical importance of studying person-centered comfort in close relationships and the contributions of my dissertation to Person Centered Theory.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

Chapter 2 presented five theoretical postulates situating the relational effects of supportive communication. Four of the five theoretical postulates were incorporated into the two studies, and I advanced specific hypotheses and research questions from these theoretical postulates. Below, I discuss each postulate individually, discussing the representation of the postulate in both studies. Table 5.1 summarizes the theoretical postulates which informed my hypotheses and research questions, along with a description of the hypotheses and research questions developed from that postulate and the corresponding results.

Table 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions Tested

Study	*Hypothesis or Research Question Tested*	*Summary of Findings*
	Postulate 3	
Study 1	H1: Evaluations of affiliation vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that HPC comfort is perceived as expressing the greatest affiliation followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort is perceived as expressing the least affiliation.	Support found for H1.
Study 1	H2: Evaluations of relational control vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that LPC comfort is perceived as expressing the greatest dominance followed by MPC comfort; HPC comfort is perceived as expressing the least dominance.	Support found for H2.
Study 1	RQ1: Do all subcomponents of affiliation and dominance judgments vary as a function of VPC comfort, following the predictions of H1 and H2?	Seven subcomponents or relational communication varied as predicted in H1 and H2.
Study 2	RQ1: Do support recipients emphasize relational meaning or content meaning in their evaluations of supportive utterances?	Support recipients explicitly described relational meaning in approximately 20% of the total utterances evaluated.
Study 2	RQ2: Is the quality of VPC comfort offered in a conversational turn associated with the type of meaning attributed to the turn by support recipients?	Analyses suggest a weak association between the quality of VPC comfort in a turn and relational meaning responses.
Study 2	H1: Increased provision of HPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (H1A); Increased provision of HPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame (H1B).	Only partial support found for H1B.
Study 2	H2: Increased provision of MPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (H2A); Increased provision of MPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame (H2B).	No support found for H2; only partial support found in additional analyses of MPC-5 and MPC-6. .
Study 2	H3: Increased provision of LPC comfort is associated with increased relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame (H3A); Increased provision of LPC comfort is associated with decreased relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (H3B).	No support found for H3.
Study 2	RQ3: When controlling for proportion of VPC comfort in a supportive turn, which representations of VPC comfort impact relational framing judgments?	Controlling for the total proportion of VPC comfort, no coefficients were statistically significant across the included conversations.

Continued,

Table 5.1, Continued: Summary of Hypotheses and Research Questions Tested

Study	*Hypothesis or Research Question Tested*	*Summary of Findings*
	Postulate 4	
Study 1	H3: Changes in satisfaction vary as a function of the quality of VPC comforting messages, such that HPC comfort generates more satisfaction followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort generates reduced satisfaction.	Support found for H3.
Study 1	H4: Changes in relational outcomes vary as a function of the quality of VPC support, such that HPC comfort generates more positive relational outcomes of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust followed by MPC comfort; LPC comfort generates more negative relational outcomes of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and trust.	Support found for H4.
	Additional Hypotheses	
Study 1	H5: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients facing a more upsetting stressor than recipients facing a mildly upsetting stressor.	No support found for H5.
Study 1	H6: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients facing a more upsetting stressor than recipients facing a mildly upsetting stressor.	No support found for H6.
Study 1	H7: The VPC quality of comforting messages exerts a stronger linear effect on relational effects for recipients receiving support from romantic partners and friends than recipients receiving support from family relationships only when receivers experience mildly upsetting stressors.	No support found for H7.
Study 2	H4: Sharing more severe stressors in supportive conversations increases judgments of the relevancy of the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (H4A); Sharing more severe stressors in supportive conversations decreases judgements of the relevancy of the dominance-submissiveness frame (H4B).	Only partial support found for H4B.
Study 2	H5: The relevancy of affiliation framing of conversational turns influences ratings of affiliation frame relevancy for the whole conversation (H5A); The relevancy of dominance framing of conversational turns influences ratings of dominance frame relevancy for the whole conversation (H5B).	No support found for H5, even in additional analyses.
Study 2	RQ4: When accounting for VPC comfort, stressor severity, and conversational frames, which factors impact relational framing judgments and account for variance in these ratings?	When controlling for all factors, the coefficient for stressor severity remained statistically supported for ratings of dominance and affiliation; the coefficient for affiliation framing on turn-level affiliation ratings was significant only in the combined RQ4 model.

Postulate 1: Emotional support is enacted in conversation

Postulate 1 situates the study of emotional support and supportive communication in the context of everyday supportive conversations. Everyday supportive conversations feature the discussion of everyday troubles or problems (Jefferson, 1980, 1988), referred to as *stressors* in my dissertation. The first postulate serves as a guide for study design and the operationalization of emotional support in Chapters 3 and 4.

Study 1, presented in Chapter 3, employed the message perception paradigm, situating formulated person-centered comforting messages in scenarios representing supportive conversations (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). I utilized the same academic stressor situation and comforting messages as Bodie, Burleson, Gill-Rosier, et al. (2011), but organized the comforting messages in a conversational format featuring turn-by-turn VPC comforting responses. Mild academic stressors, such as failing a quiz, and more severe academic stressors, such as failing a class, represent a type of stressor common to the young adults who participated in Study 1. In Study 1, all comforting scenarios and conversations received appropriate ratings of naturalism, normality, and realism, but there was variability within scenarios based on the level of VPC comfort. High person-centered (HPC) comfort received higher ratings of naturalism, normality, and realism compared to low person-centered (LPC) comfort. One reason why the LPC comforting scenarios received lower ratings of naturalism, normality, and realism may be the relative infrequency of LPC comfort in comforting conversations which I observed in Study 2. LPC comfort may not be evaluated as normal or realistic when LPC comfort is the only form of comfort communicated in a conversation. HPC comfort, however, was also relatively infrequent which suggests the higher ratings may be due to a halo effect attributed to the already close relationship shared with the support providers.

Study 1 has important methodological implications for the study of supportive communication and for Person Centered Theory more specifically. In Study 1, I presented a series of person-centered comforting messages in a conversational format and had participants rate the conversation as a whole, rather than presenting a series of single messages. These results suggest that the relational effects of person-centered comfort can be evaluated with the conversation as the unit of analysis and still be clearly manipulated to express LPC, MPC, or HPC comfort. Further, the messages and conversational format can be attributed to a supportive partner, presenting an alternative to training supportive partners to provide varying levels of person-centered comfort.

Study 2 employed the interaction analysis paradigm, situating naturally occurring person-centered comforting communication in conversations between friends (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). The comforting content of support provider's conversational turns primarily consisted of moderately person-centered (MPC) comfort. LPC comfort and HPC comfort were both relatively infrequent. Both studies provide ways to represent emotional support in everyday conversations as I situated person-centered comfort, a quality of emotional support, in the conversational context. Drawing from methodological paradigms in supportive communication (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002), I was able to represent everyday conversations in two different ways in the two studies presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

Postulate 2: Enacted emotional support has individual and relational effects

Emotional support has effects, impacting how people think about problems (Jones, 2004), evaluate the quality of support (Bodie et al., 2012), and feel about their relationships (Afifi et al., 2013). Effects are multidimensional, permitting the exploration of various identity, instrumental, and relational effects; this postulate lead to the inclusion of various relational evaluations and

outcomes representing the relational effects of enacted emotional support. The relational effects of emotional support are composed of message evaluations and outcomes (Bodie, 2013b; Bodie et al., 2012). Postulate 2 provides the theoretical logic needed to advance Postulates 3 and 4. Additionally, Postulate 2, like Postulate 1, provides study design guidance in selecting appropriate methodological paradigms with which the relational effects of emotional support are evaluated. The results of both studies will now be discussed in relation to Postulates 3 and 4.

Postulate 3: Enacted emotional support embodies content and relational meaning

Every message has both content and relational meaning (Watzlawick et al., 1967). This is no different for supportive messages. The content of emotional support includes verbal and nonverbal actions representing "the intentional effort by a helper to assist a target in coping with a perceived state of affective distress" (Burleson, 2003, p. 552). Person-centered comfort is a quality that captures differences in the content of emotionally supportive messages (Burleson, 1984b, 1994b). The results of Study 1 and Study 2 revealed variations in the evaluation of relational meaning embodied in the content of person-centered comfort.

Both studies employed Relational Framing Theory to investigate how recipients frame and evaluate supportive conversations (Dillard et al., 1996). Supportive conversations are predominantly interpreted through the affiliation-disaffiliation frame, a result that supports the differential salience hypothesis - effective processing of communication involves the displacement of one frame over the other. While supportive communication is still evaluated through the dominance-submissiveness frame, the affiliation-disaffiliation appeared more salient and relevant for evaluating conversation scenarios in Study 1 featuring only written content, as well as the verbal and nonverbal conversational actions in Study 2.

In Study 1, evaluations of relational meaning also captured fundamental themes in relational communication (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, 1987; Dillard et al., 1999). Verbal person-centered (VPC) comfort presented in conversational scenarios reflected various representations of relational communication: HPC comfort received higher ratings of affect, intimacy, involvement, equality, similarity, and receptivity. LPC comfort received higher ratings of dominance, compared to HPC comfort.

In Study 2, support recipients provided written accounts of meaning while evaluating conversational turns in supportive conversations. Responses emphasizing relational meaning were relatively infrequent compared to responses emphasizing the content of the support provider's turn. When relational meaning was emphasized, these brief responses captured the relational history shared between partners (Planalp & Garvin-Doxas, 1994). Other responses reflected the interpretations of supportive acts, including understanding.

Like Study 1, Study 2 also has methodological implications for the study of person-centered support. Study 2 represents the provision of person-centered comfort in conversations; indeed, the coding of these responses supports that the theoretical characteristics of the person-centered hierarchy are reflected in everyday supportive conversations. Furthermore, the relational meaning of person-centered comfort can be analyzed through both scaled and open-ended responses. When the open-ended responses were elicited, participants had access to the video recording of the conversation featuring both visible and verbal acts of meaning which resulted in very detailed responses of meaning which were then coded and represented in the statistical models in Study 2. The interaction analysis paradigm acknowledges the benefit of collecting multiple evaluations (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002); the results of Study 2 further extend this assumption to include open-ended responses and reflections.

Responses emphasizing understanding were challenging to code as some responses mirrored semantic understanding or comprehension while others interpreted understanding as expressing relational meaning. Based on the coding manual and original definitions of content meaning, responses coded as content meaning report on comprehension, using synonyms and similar phrasing to restate what was said in the supportive conversation turn. For example, the support provider in Dyad 30 says, "I understand" (turn 5); in response to this conversational turn, the support recipient wrote, "He understands." Similarly, the support provider in Dyad 65 asked a question ("What kind of dog was she again?"), and the support recipient wrote, "Understand what type of dog I had." Other content meaning responses of understanding use synonyms for understanding ("I got you;" "Gotcha;" "I feel you"). In contrast, relational meaning responses were coded as such when responses provided interpretations beyond the replication of content expressing understanding. For instance, a longer response in Dyad 4 involves the support provider disclosing the content of an assigned paper[21], but the support recipient interprets this statement as "He understands my doubts." Following the coding procedures, because this statement goes beyond repetition of content using synonyms, it was coded as relational meaning. Certainly, this difference is attributed to the coding procedures used which studies responses in context and compares responses to the original supportive content in a conversational turn. It also, however, illustrates the challenge in coding meaning from written responses. Both content meaning responses and relational meaning responses represented understanding; content meaning responses emphasized and mirrored understanding the content of supportive turns while

[21] In the conversational turn, the support provider said, "I have to write a paper on supporting gay marriage, and all the shit I have to look into with religion contradicts itself. Like with the ch- the Bible saying one thing, I mean, and then the idea that God created everybody this way, blah blah blah, like it all contradicts itself so it's a pretty crazy thing to think about." The support recipient responded to the open-ended prompt with, "He understands my doubts." Following the coding procedures, this response was coded as relational meaning because the response expresses an idea that differs from the content of the turn and provides an interpretation of what was meant (a story expressing and showing understanding why people doubt religion and the Bible). If the support provider wrote that his friend also believes that the Bible is contradictory, it would have been content meaning.

relational meaning responses used understanding to represent relational interpretations. While challenging, coding and representing responses of understanding encompasses the third postulate as emotional support embodied content and relational meaning.

The results of Study 1 and Study 2 have promise for the further exploration of Postulate 3. Future research should first test the relational meaning of other representations of emotional support before testing the relational meaning of other forms of supportive communication, such as informational support. Cutrona and Russell (1990) distinguished emotion-focused support from problem-focused support, recognizing the different intentions in the content of emotional support versus informational support – emotion-focused support recognizes a relational partner's affective state and attempts to alleviate upset, while problem-focused support recognizes aspects of a problem and attempts to alleviate the features of the problem which are responsible for a relational partner's affective state Similarly, Person Centered Theory (PCT) recognizes person-centered speech is distinct from *position* centered speech (Applegate, 1980; Applegate & Delia, 1980; Jones & Bodie, 2014). Advice, a form of informational support, provides recommendations of what to say, do, think, or feel in response to a problem (MacGeorge et al., 2008). While advice can acknowledge emotions or feelings, these recommendations are "action-focused" that provide recommended actions of how to feel, versus person-centered comfort that are "emotion-focused" acknowledgements of feelings not accompanied by suggestions of actions (Li & Feng, 2015). Incorporating and representing relational meaning in studies of advice should provide additional insight into evaluations of advice messages. Tests of this postulate should then extend the claim to forms of supportive communication beyond emotional support because supportive conversations include both problem-focused and emotion-focused support. Problem-focused support such as advice may produce different results in perceived relationship

quality. Extending this postulate to test the relational effects of problem-focused support would better represent the ways in which support providers offer support and the ways in which these messages impact relationship quality.

Postulate 4: Relational quality varies as a function of enacted emotional support

Relationships are shaped and influenced by communication (Duck, 2007; Duck et al., 1991), where perceptions of relationships change based on day-to-day experiences and interactions with relational partners (Leatham & Duck, 1990). In the theoretical development of Postulate 4, I argued that *relationship quality* is represented by distinct constructs that extend beyond relational satisfaction, and the results of Study 1 provide evidence in favor of this theoretical argument.

Study 1 tested the representations of relational quality proposed in Postulate 4, including closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, satisfaction, and trust. VPC comfort produced changes in relational quality in Study 1. LPC comfort produced negative changes in closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, and satisfaction, while HPC comfort produced positive changes in these same measures of relational quality. Based on the correlation results and the effect sizes, there is evidence to suggest liking is distinct from loving, posited in Chapter 2. Contrary to predictions, LPC comfort did not produce negative changes in trust – the only relational construct studied that did not conform to predictions. MPC comfort was only clearly differentiated from LPC comfort and HPC comfort in intimacy, liking, and satisfaction; the effect of VPC comfort was also strongest for the relational constructs of intimacy, liking, and satisfaction.

The fourth postulate presents the opportunity for investigating how emotional support enacted in supportive conversations produces variations in relational quality over time. Study 1

focused on the immediate outcomes of supportive conversation scenarios, empirically testing if all relational qualities predicted vary as a function of VPC comfort. A practical outcome of this investigation is guidance for future studies of relationship quality, particularly those adopting a longitudinal approach to understanding the relational effects of emotional support. Initially mentioned in Chapter 1, I tested the effects of VPC comfort on seven different representations of relational quality; my results suggest the concepts of closeness, commitment, intimacy, liking, loving, satisfaction, and trust are distinct concepts that describe a relationship's quality. From these results, variations in VPC comfort had the strongest effects on *intimacy*, *liking*, and *satisfaction*. My results hold promise for long-term studies of the distal effects of emotional support (see High & Solomon, 2016). At the same time, more research is needed to test the fourth postulate in longitudinal studies which capture fluctuations in relational quality following enacted support conversations and determine how support quality produces long-term effects in relational quality.

Returning to the arguments developed in the fourth postulate, I originally proposed that *perceived partner responsiveness* would vary as a function of VPC comfort. While I did not test this aspect of the fourth postulate directly, I plan to empirically test this argument in future studies, using methods similar to those in Study 1. Tests of perceived partner responsiveness would add to the characteristics presented in Table 5.2. Additionally, like Postulate 3, I plan to extend and test the relational outcomes of informational support, recognizing that variations in the quality of advice messages should result in differences in perceived closeness, satisfaction, and intimacy.

Postulate 5: There is individual variability in the identification of relational meaning and for the relational effects of enacted emotional support.

Characteristics of the supportive situation, environmental cues, and individual differences attributed to the support receiver account for variation in the processing and evaluation of emotional support (Bodie & Burleson, 2008; Bodie, Burleson, Gill-Rosier, et al., 2011). Postulate 5 first acknowledged the situational and environmental characteristics identified in the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes should account for variation in the evaluation of comforting communication, but then focused on identifying the particular individual differences which should capture variance in how people perceive, conceptualize, and think about relationships. While I did not test the individual differences identified in Postulate 5 in either study, I drew from the theoretical logic in Study 1.

In Study 1, I drew from the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes to test the moderating effect of stressor severity, support provider sex, and the type of relationship on the relational effects of VPC comfort. The results of Study 1 did not support the predictions in the hypotheses, suggesting the need to further focus on the fifth postulate in future research. The individual differences identified in the fifth postulate were inspired and developed from the dual-process theory. Offering high quality emotional support is a skilled accomplishment (Burleson, 1995); as is the ability to effectively process the effects of emotional support. Stable, trait-like individual differences impact individual communicative skills, including the perception of and valuation of social relationships. Failing to address the fifth postulate is a limitation but it does not negate the role of individual differences, but rather suggests a need to focus on these individual differences in the future.

Individual differences should account for variation in the relational effects of enacted support. The results of Study 1 and Study 2 suggest there is variance unaccounted for in

evaluations of relational meaning and relationship quality outcomes following VPC comfort. Relational Framing Theory posits dispositional individual differences may influence the relational framing process; attachment-related anxiety is associated with identifying both frames as relevant when processing messages (Solomon et al., 2002). Attachment styles moderate the processing of VPC comforting messages (Bodie, Burleson, Gill-Rosier, et al., 2011). I also predicted interpersonal construct differentiation should moderate relational effects of VPC based on prior research related to individual effects (Bodie, Burleson, Holmstrom, et al., 2011). The effects of individual differences on relational effects could be direct or indirect, suggesting the need for a model testing for moderation like the simplified hypothesized model presented in Figure 5.1.

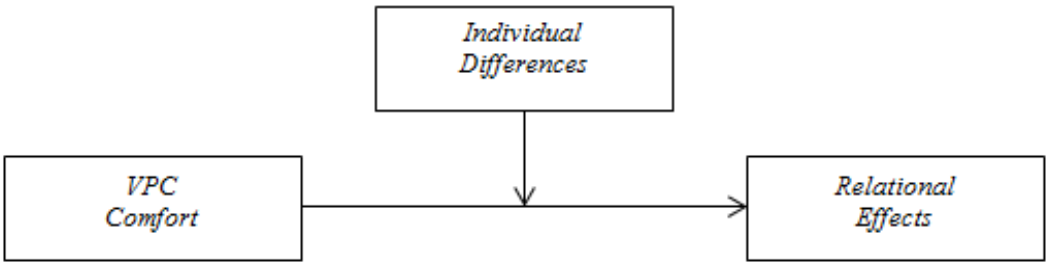

Figure 5.1: Hypothesized Model Developed from Postulate 5

The fifth postulate recognizes the importance of the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes and the moderating effects predicted by the dual-process theory, as well as the need to draw from other related theoretical perspectives when investigating the relational effects of person-centered comfort. The postulates representing my theoretical framework ultimately serve a purpose larger than guiding the development of the two studies contained in this dissertation. These postulates recognize the theoretical assumptions which will guide my future programmatic study of supportive relationships. Further, these postulates provide an organizational framework

for other empirical findings which are related to the ways in which my own programmatic study of supportive relationships will develop. I now discuss my planned program of study which incorporates these theoretical postulates.

The Programmatic Study of (Un) Supportive Relationships

When introducing my dissertation in Chapter 1, I raised more questions than could conceivably be answered in any one project, including: Can emotional support influence relationship quality? Do other forms of supportive communication also affect relationship quality? What role does emotional support play in the development, maintenance, and dissolution of relationships? Are particular messages more important in different stages of relationship development? Are differences in the effect of support in relationships a difference in kind or degree?

The theoretical postulates developed in Chapter 2 provide guidance for my planned program of research investigating the role of supportive communication on the development, maintenance, and dissolution of (un) supportive relationships, exploring these and other questions. I briefly outline how the theoretical postulates guide my theoretical assumptions about the study of supportive communication in relationships and how the postulates will be represented in future studies of supportive communication and (un)supportive relationships.

When designing a program of study focusing on the development of supportive relationships, I am biased towards representing supportive communication as enacted support versus relying on perceptions of support. Enacted support captures the things people say and do when supporting others (Goldsmith, 2004). My future studies will strive to capture verbal and nonverbal actions through recorded conversations gathered in a laboratory space or with recordings gathered by relational partners in their dorm rooms, apartments, and homes. As

relationships develop over time, I will have to consider the challenges of capturing multiple conversations. Reports of received support (Barrera et al., 1981), where people check behaviors that occurred in conversations, may provide a way to capture supportive actions when recording conversations is not feasible. When written scenarios with pre-formulated messages are deemed appropriate for hypotheses and research questions, my plan is to mirror Study 1 and represent messages as conversational turns in order to best represent the first postulate. Nonverbal behaviors should also be incorporated and represented in conversational scenarios, recognizing that nonverbal actions also embody relational meaning (Burgoon et al., 1984; Edwards, 2011). Capturing conversational content will allow both problem-focused support and emotion-focused support to be classified and coded, in line with the interaction analysis paradigm (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002).

Additionally, I plan to represent enacted support as it occurs in everyday conversations. Troubles talk is situated in everyday conversations (Jefferson, 1988). I have been working on a project with Dr. Bodie exploring the similarities between recent problem sharing conversations and capitalization conversations (2016, July). Our preliminary findings suggest people seek support in both problem sharing conversations and capitalization conversations and these conversations are primarily described as serious conversations. When studying how support impacts relationship development, I will have to be mindful that a researcher-derived 5-minute supportive conversation in a laboratory may need to incorporate a method and design where relational partners are able to take turns providing support to each other for everyday problems and positive events in conversations.

If I represent conversations where relational partners take turns providing support and receiving support, both relational partners will experience individual and relational effects and

interpret relational meaning from conversations that must be represented, in line with Postulates 2, 3, and 4. Coupled with the challenge of capturing long-term effects of supportive conversations, Study 1 provides guidance of which relational effects should be included when constrained by time and design. Prior studies on individual effects should provide similar guidance of which measures are most appropriate to include with relational measures.

My goal is to study the effects of support on relationships as the relationships are developed and transformed through supportive communication. In these studies, I will have to consider current relationship quality. Studying how supportive relationships develop may be best situated in voluntary relationships like friendships and romantic partners. At the same time, the study of the dissolution of supportive relationships should represent family relationships, as not all family relationships are interpreted as supportive. Measuring existing relational quality will need to be incorporated and accounted for, much like individual differences (Postulate 5).

Theoretically, I will incorporate theories of interpersonal communication and supportive communication to study (un) supportive relationships. The studies in my dissertation incorporated the dual-process theory of supportive message outcomes (Bodie & Burleson, 2008), Person Centered Theory (Burleson, 1984b; Jones & Bodie, 2014), and Relational Framing Theory (Dillard et al., 1996). When extending the postulates to study informational support like advice, Advice Response Theory should guide the features of advice messages which may be more (or less) salient in relational meaning evaluations and relational effects (MacGeorge et al., 2016); similarly, Politeness Theory should be utilized to represent features of supportive communication which may influence judgments of frame relevancy (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goldsmith, 1994, 2008). Drawing from interpersonal communication theories, Communication Privacy Management Theory may help explain why people stop sharing

problems and seeking support from relational partners when studying the quality of support offered and what happens after a supportive conversation (Petronio, 2002, 2013). Similarly, Relational Dialectics Theory may provide guidance for understanding how supportive relationships are maintained and the challenges of seeking and providing quality support to close relational partners (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

Guided by these postulates, I plan to develop a series of smaller studies focused on aspects of these larger questions. Some of these studies have been acknowledged in discussing the theoretical postulates, such as testing the relational effects of informational support, or the need to test how relational effects of VPC comfort are moderated by individual differences. Supportive communication encompasses various supportive actions including problem-focused support and emotion-focused support; these first two studies are important as I build to my desired goal of conducting longitudinal study of how (un) supportive relationships develop.

Communication shapes relationships, and I believe the study of how (un) supportive relationships develop has important theoretical and practical merit. In this longitudinal study, I would like to target groups of young adults, like those people who enter a fraternal organization or room together in a suite on campus and track how relationships develop in the first semester of college. In such an investigation, I would like individuals to have at least two recorded conversations in a laboratory or common room space (or utilizing unobtrusive recording devices like Mehl's EAR), complete brief evaluations approximately every two weeks reflecting on their developing relationships, support seeking behavior, support receiving behavior, all while reflecting on the relationships being developed with their suite-mates, fraternal brothers, or sorority sisters. Young adults in this environment would be facing positive and negative stressors representative of everyday stressors (e.g., picking majors; earning good and bad

grades). One novel contribution of my planned program of research is person-centered training, where some individuals in these circles receive training on how to explicitly recognize feelings and emotions and offer perspective about upsetting events when responding to another person's disclosures. From this type of longitudinal study, I would be able to provide insight into questions about how emotional support impacts the development of relationships which vary in relational quality while capturing supportive behaviors and perceptions that should account for these variations in relational quality.

Conclusion

My dissertation stands to make theoretical contributions to the study of supportive communication by identifying the relational meanings and relational outcomes of emotional support. Support recipients recognize the affiliative nature of higher quality emotional support, and changes in relational quality vary as a function of the VPC quality of enacted support. These changes provide evidence that relationship quality represents diverse constructs including commitment, satisfaction, and intimacy. My dissertation makes theoretical contributions to Person Centered Theory by testing another class of effects, providing continued evidence that HPC comfort is evaluated as more affiliative and produces positive changes in relationship quality, while LPC comfort is evaluated as more dominant and produces some negative changes in relationship quality. I also have integrated Person Centered Theory and Relational Framing Theory, with findings that suggest features of the episode like stressor severity impact framing judgments and evidence that relational framing occurs at multiple levels of abstraction. Practical contributions of my dissertation include the continued recognition of what we say matters to our relationship partners. My desire to study how supportive communication impacts the development of relationships ultimately reflects what I hope to see when watching episodes of

any television show: I hope to see writers give viewers characters that have meaningful relationships with others, mirroring real-life relationships.

The relationships that unfold in a television series do not always result in two characters becoming each other's "person" like on *Grey's Anatomy*. On-screen relationships are just as varied as off-screen relationships: For every close friendship like Grey and Yang (*Grey's Anatomy*), J.D. and Turk (*Scrubs*), Troy and Abed (*Community*), and Ann and Leslie (*Parks and Recreation*), there are fragile friendships which fluctuate over the course of seasons and episodes like Buffy's friendships with Cordelia and Anya (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), Ann's friendship with April (*Parks and Recreation*), or the rivalry-turned-friendship between Rory and Paris (*Gilmore Girls*). Families like the Bravermans (*Parenthood*), the Crawleys (*Downton Abbey*), the Gilmores (*Gilmore Girls*), the Fishers (*Six Feet Under*), the Pfeffermans (*Transparent*), the Taylors (*Friday Night Lights*), and even the humorous Bluths (*Arrested Development*) provide tangible examples of the ways family members and friends are more (or less) there for each other in times of need, exchanging instrumental, informational, tangible, and emotional support. Of course, television also provides representations of (un) supportive romantic relationships – too many to name here.

My dissertation represents the culmination of one project, much like the final season of a television show. The questions introduced in Chapter 1 and the program of scholarly research identified in the current chapter will guide me in determining what comes next. I will still remain a consumer of television relationships and a consumer of scholarly literature on supportive communication and relationships, but my dissertation has helped me to transform into a producer of scholarly knowledge on supportive communication and relationships. Inspired by both television writers who depict supportive relationships and scholars who study supportive

relationships, I plan to continue representing relationships and supportive communication in my scholarship while enjoying their depiction on my television.

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APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: Andrea Vickery
Communication Studies

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: September 28, 2015

RE: **IRB#** E9518

TITLE: The Relational Effects of Person-Centered Enacted Support

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 9/28/2015

Approved X **Disapproved**

Approval Date: 9/28/2015 **Approval Expiration Date:** 9/27/2018

Exemption Category/Paragraph: 2a

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman Dlandin

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:**

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb*

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts B-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit the completed application to the IRB Office by e-mail (irb@lsu.edu) for review. If you would like to have your application reviewed by a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee before submitting it to the IRB office, you can find the list of committee members at http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/human-subjects-screening-committee-members/.

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) This completed form
(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php)
(F) Signed copy of the IRB Security of Data Agreement: (https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/files/2013/07/Security-of-Data-Agreement.pdf)

1) Principal Investigator: Andrea J. Vickery **Rank:** Doctoral Candidate

Dept: Communication Studies **Ph:** 578-0249 **E-mail:** avicke4@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If the Principal Investigator is a student, identify and name supervising professor in this space

Graham D. Bodie, Associate Professor and Advisor, gbodie@lsu.edu, 578-6683

3) Project Title: The Relational Effects of Person-Centered Enacted Support

4) Proposal? (yes or no) No **If Yes, LSU Proposal Number**

Also, if YES, either ◯ **This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant**

OR ◯ **More IRB Applications will be filed later**

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) Communication Studies Students > 18 years old

*Indicate any **"vulnerable populations" to be used**: (children <18 the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Andrea Vickery **Date** 9/5/2015 (no per signatures)

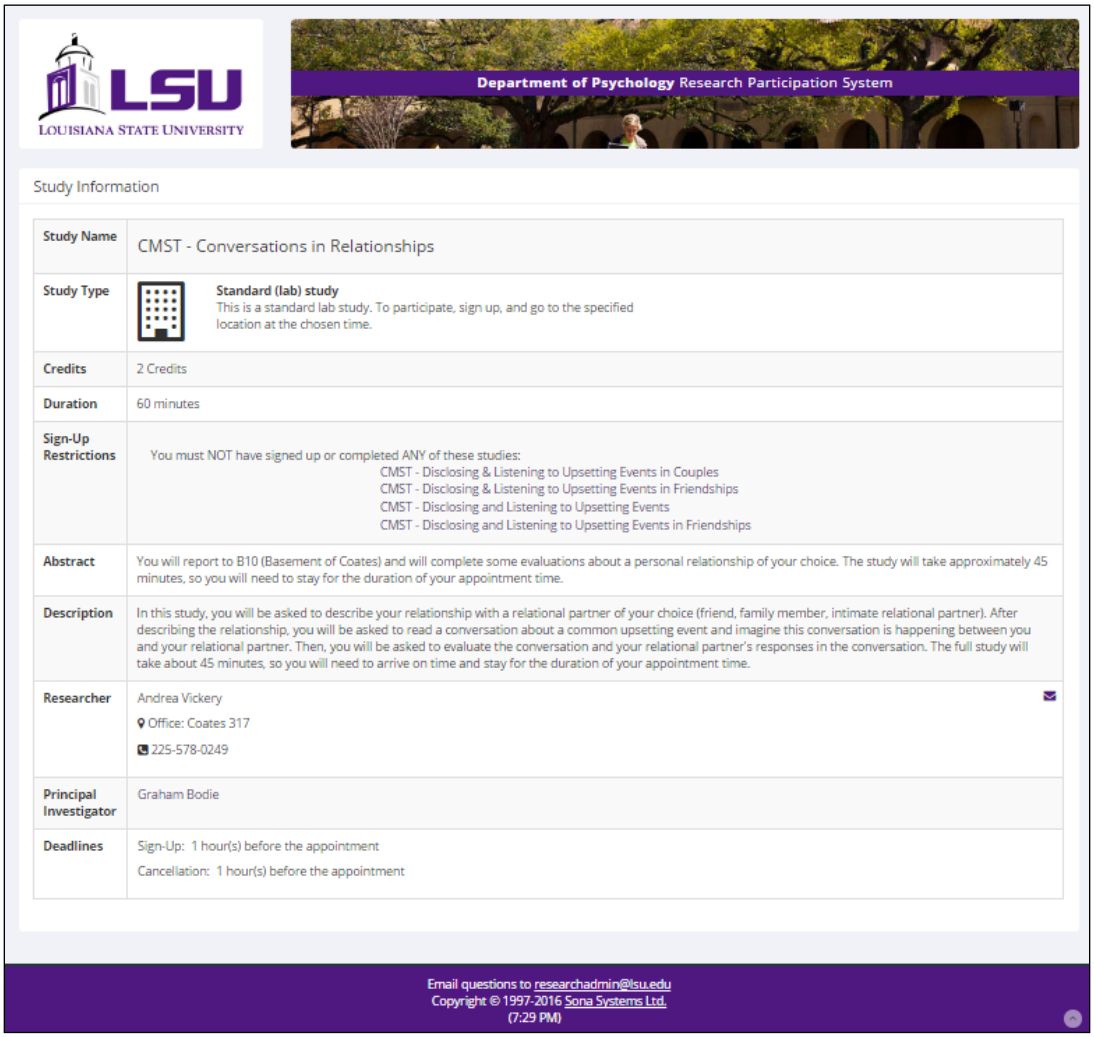
** **I certify my responses are accurate and complete.** If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: ◯ Exempted ◯ Not Exempted Category/Paragraph

Signed Consent Waived?: ◯ Yes **or** ◯ No

Reviewer **Signature** **Date**

APPENDIX B: STUDY 1 RECRUITMENT AND ADVERTISEMENT



APPENDIX C: STUDY 1 EXPERIMENTAL STIMULI

001: Low Severity Stressor / LPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

001

Imagine that you are in a college class in which the professor gives frequent quizzes over the assigned reading. These quizzes are given at the beginning of class and cover the material you should have read for that class period. Each quiz counts for 1% of your total grade and you have received either an 'A' or a 'B' on all of these quizzes so far. You took another one of these quizzes on Tuesday. At the end of class on Thursday the professor hands back the last round of quizzes and you discover that you received a 'C' on it. You feel somewhat irritated about this.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got back my grade for my reading quiz I took Tuesday.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: I got a C. I've gotten As and Bs on the other ones. I'm bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.

Your partner: Well, just try to forget about the quiz. You know, there are more important things in the world than stupid quizzes over class readings. Anyway, it's a pretty dumb class; it's really not worth worrying about. So, just try to forget about it. Think about something else.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.

Your partner: Well, maybe you're just not trying hard enough. Maybe that's why you didn't do so well on the quiz. You're probably just gonna have to study harder. You know, you shouldn't be so upset about it if you didn't study as hard as you could have.

You: Yeah. I'm just worried that I won't do well on the other quizzes either.

Your partner: Well, you know, wasn't that you I saw at Allison's party Monday night? I mean, you probably just didn't do the readings since you were partying. In that case, it's really your own fault. You know, you can't blame the class or the quiz when you make a mistake.

002: Low Severity Stressor / MPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

002

Imagine that you are in a college class in which the professor gives frequent quizzes over the assigned reading. These quizzes are given at the beginning of class and cover the material you should have read for that class period. Each quiz counts for 1% of your total grade and you have received either an 'A' or a 'B' on all of these quizzes so far. You took another one of these quizzes on Tuesday. At the end of class on Thursday the professor hands back the last round of quizzes and you discover that you received a 'C' on it. You feel somewhat irritated about this.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner:	Hi! How are you doing?
You:	Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got back my grade for my reading quiz I took Tuesday.
Your partner:	Yeah?
You:	I got a C. I've gotten As and Bs on the other ones. I'm bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well.
Your partner:	Really.
You:	Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.
Your partner:	Well, that's really too bad. But if it makes you feel better I heard a lot of people don't do well on those quizzes. You've done better on all the other ones and will probably do well on the rest of them.
You:	Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.
Your partner:	Well, you know that I'm really sorry you didn't do better on the quiz. I wish you'd done better on it too. But I can see how this happened. College is really tough sometimes.
You:	Yeah. I'm just worried that I won't do well on the other quizzes either.
Your partner:	Well, I bet you didn't have the lowest score, so at least you probably did better than some people. And remember, you aced that biology midterm last week. Hey, I know! Allison is having a party tonight. Let's go get some dinner and then go to the party. OK?

003: Low Severity Stressor / HPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

003

Imagine that you are in a college class in which the professor gives frequent quizzes over the assigned reading. These quizzes are given at the beginning of class and cover the material you should have read for that class period. Each quiz counts for 1% of your total grade and you have received either an 'A' or a 'B' on all of these quizzes so far. You took another one of these quizzes on Tuesday. At the end of class on Thursday the professor hands back the last round of quizzes and you discover that you received a 'C' on it. You feel somewhat irritated about this.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got back my grade for my reading quiz I took Tuesday.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: I got a C. I've gotten As and Bs on the other ones. I'm bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.

Your partner: Well, it makes sense that you feel bummed out about the quiz. I mean, I know how frustrating it is to work really hard in a class and still not do as well as you want. That can drive you crazy – it can sort of blow your self-confidence. But look…well, I know that it's probably hard to look at it this way, but maybe you've learned something from this that will help you do better on the next quiz.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.

Your partner: Well, I understand that you probably feel down right now. You've got every right to feel that way. I mean, not doing as well as you want on an assignment is always hard. I'm sure that you can figure something out; you're one of the brightest people I know. That's why this must be getting to you right now.

You: Yeah. I'm just worried that I won't do well on the other quizzes either.

Your partner: I know. It would be hard not to worry about that. I mean, I know how important your grades are to you. I guess the thing now is to study hard for the next quiz and try not to be too stressed about this one. I know you're not very happy right now, but it will be ok.

004: High Severity Stressor / LPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

004

Imagine that it is the end of finals week. You have just completed the semester. You were enrolled in a particularly tough class that requires a B to officially enter your major. Since the professor indicated grades would be posted by the end of the week, you log on to Moodle to check your grades. As you look at your grade you are shocked. The grade on the screen is lower than what you needed to enter your major. In fact, it's a D. You feel awful – you are very disappointed about your grade in the class and quite upset about not qualifying to enter your desired major. You feel even worse when you realize that you may have to re-take this class over the summer rather than participate in a summer internship you received.

Later that day, you run into your partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just checked my grades for the semester.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: I got a D in one of my classes. I needed a B to get into my major! I'm really bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well on the final. I really thought I understood the material.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I feel like crap. I'm really stressed out.

Your partner: Well, just try to forget about the class. You know, there are more important things in the world than getting into a certain major. Anyway, it's a pretty dumb class; it's really not worth worrying about. So, just try to forget about it. Think about something else.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel pretty bad about it.

Your partner: Well, maybe you just didn't try hard enough. Maybe that's why you got a D. You're probably just gonna have to study harder from now on. You know, you shouldn't be so upset about the class if you didn't work as hard as you could have.

You: Yeah. I'm still really worried though.

Your partner: Well, you know, didn't I see you every Thursday night at the bars? I mean, you probably just didn't study for the class because you were partying too much. In that case, it's really your own fault. You know, you can't blame the class or the final when you screw up.

005: High Severity Stressor / MPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

005

Imagine that it is the end of finals week. You have just completed the semester. You were enrolled in a particularly tough class that requires a B to officially enter your major. Since the professor indicated grades would be posted by the end of the week, you log onto Moodle to check your grades. As you look at your grade you are shocked. The grade on the screen is lower than what you needed to enter your major. In fact, it's a D. You feel awful – you are very disappointed about your grade in the class and quite upset about not qualifying to enter your desired major. You feel even worse when you realize that you may have to re-take this class over the summer rather than participate in a summer internship you received.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your conversational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just checked my grades for the semester.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: I got a D in one of my classes. I needed a B to get into my major! I'm really bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well on the final. I really thought I understood the material.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I feel like crap. I'm really stressed out.

Your partner: Well, that's really too bad. But if it makes you feel better I heard a lot of people don't do well in that class. Plus, you can still retake it and get in the major.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel pretty bad about it.

Your partner: Well, you know that I'm really sorry you didn't do better in the class. I wish you'd done better in it too. But I can see how this happened. College is really tough sometimes.

You: Yeah. I'm still really worried though.

Your partner: Well, I bet you didn't have the lowest grade, so at least you probably did better than some people. And I bet you did well in your other classes. Hey, I know! Allison is having a party tonight. Let's go have some dinner and then go to the party, OK?

006: High Severity Stressor / HPC Comfort (Label not shown to participants)

006

Imagine that it is the end of finals week. You have just completed the semester. You were enrolled in a particularly tough class that requires a B to officially enter your major. Since the professor indicated grades would be posted by the end of the week, you log onto Moodle to check your grades. As you look at your grade you are shocked. The grade on the screen is lower than what you needed to enter your major. In fact, it's a D. You feel awful – you are very disappointed about your grade in the class and quite upset about not qualifying to enter your desired major. You feel even worse when you realize that you may have to re-take this class over the summer rather than participate in a summer internship you received.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just checked my grades for the semester.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: I got a D in one of my classes. I needed a B to get into my major! I'm really bummed out. I thought I'd done pretty well on the final. I really thought I understood the material.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I feel like crap. I'm really stressed out.

Your partner: Well, it makes sense that you feel bummed out about the grade. I mean, I know how frustrating it is to work really hard in a class and still not do well. That can drive you crazy – it can sort of blow your self-confidence. But look…well, I know it's probably hard to look at it this way, but maybe you've learned something from this that will help you do better in the class if you retake it.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel pretty bad about it.

Your partner: Well, I understand that you probably feel down right now. You've got every right to feel that way. I mean, getting a bad grade is always hard. I'm sure that you can figure something out; you're one of the brightest people I know. That's why this must be getting to you right now.

You: Yeah. I'm still really worried though.

Your partner: I know. It would be hard not to worry about that. I mean, I know how important your grades are to you. I guess the thing now is to try to figure out what you'll do next semester. I know you're not very happy right now, but it will be ok

Additional conversation scenarios collected but not represented in Study 1:

007: Low Severity Romantic Stressor/LPC Comfort ***(Label not shown to participants)***

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." As you are talking on the phone with your dating partner the subject of doing things together is brought up. A minor dispute arises about the amount of time you spent with your friends last weekend. Before the conversation can be resolved your cell phone dies. Since you are on campus you have no way to reach your partner. You are a little frustrated by the whole situation.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just had a disagreement with my boyfriend/girlfriend.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: Yeah, we were arguing about how much time we spend together.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.

Your partner: Well, this isn't the end of the world you know. I mean, having an argument is not the worst thing that could happen to you, and to be honest, maybe you need to spend less time together. Anyway, you've got tons of other things to do on this campus, you know, lots of opportunities. You just gotta get out there and get going.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.

Your partner: Look, nobody is worth getting so worked up about. I mean, it's just not that big a deal. You have other things to worry about. Face the fact that worrying isn't worth your trouble and stop being so depressed about the whole thing.

You: Yeah. I'm just worried about it.

Your partner: Well, it's pretty silly to feel so bad. You're an adult now. You should know that these things are a part of life—and you're crazy if you think this stuff doesn't happen all the time. I mean, it's just not smart to be so upset. No one is worth that much trouble.

008: Low Severity Romantic Stressor/ MPC Comfort *(Label not shown to participants)*

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." As you are talking on the phone with your dating partner the subject of doing things together is brought up. A minor dispute arises about the amount of time you spent with your friends last weekend. Before the conversation can be resolved your cell phone dies. Since you are on campus you have no way to reach your partner. You are a little frustrated by the whole situation.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner:	Hi! How are you doing?
You:	Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just had a disagreement with my boyfriend/girlfriend.
Your partner:	Yeah?
You:	Yeah, we were arguing about how much time we spend together.
Your partner:	Really.
You:	Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.
Your partner:	Well, that's really too bad. Relationships are so much trouble sometimes. It seems like relationships involve a lot of fighting at this point in life.
You:	Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.
Your partner:	Well, you know that I'm really sorry that you're arguing. I wish it didn't have to be that way. But I can see how this happened. I mean, relationships aren't easy.
You:	Yeah. I'm just worried about it.
Your partner:	Look, let's get out of here. I know of a big party over on Carlotta Street tonight. There'll be lots of people there – especially the hotties. It should be a blast, and having some fun is just what you need right now. OK?

009: Low Severity Romantic Stressor / HPC Comfort *(Label not shown to participants)*

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." As you are talking on the phone with your dating partner the subject of doing things together is brought up. A minor dispute arises about the amount of time you spent with your friends last weekend. Before the conversation can be resolved your cell phone dies. Since you are on campus you have no way to reach your partner. You are a little frustrated by the whole situation.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just had a disagreement with my boyfriend/girlfriend.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: Yeah, we were arguing about how much time we spend together.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I guess I'm a little upset about it.

Your partner: Sure. I understand. I mean, it's hard to figure everything out in a relationship. It's understandable that you are stressed out since it's someone you really care about. It makes sense that you would be upset about this.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel kind of bad about it.

Your partner: Well, I understand that you feel down right now. You have every right to feel upset. I mean, disagreeing with someone you care about is always hard. I sure hope that you two will work it out.

You: Yeah. I'm just worried about it.

Your partner: Well, it's a difficult situation to be in, that's for sure. I mean, that probably doesn't make you feel any better, but these things happen in relationships from time to time. Disagreements are never easy – you just have to figure out how to deal with these problems.

010: High Severity Romantic Stressor / LPC Comfort *(Label not shown to participants)*

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." When you check your voice mail one afternoon the message from your partner says, "We need to talk." Since it sounds serious you rush over to see what's wrong. When you arrive at your partner's apartment, he/she has an odd look on his/her face. Before you can ask what is wrong, your partner begins to speak, explaining that the relationship is not working out as planned and that it is now officially over. You are stunned and very hurt. You try to ask your partner about what has gone wrong, but your partner says that the reasons don't matter anyway since he/she has accepted an internship 600 miles away. You leave feeling shocked and more than a little crushed; this is about the most hurt you've ever felt in this kind of relationship.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got dumped.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: Yeah, we just broke up! I really thought that we might be together forever. I can't believe this happened.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I feel terrible. I'm devastated.

Your partner: Well, this isn't the end of the world, you know. I mean, breaking up is not the worst thing that could happen to you, and to be honest, I think you'll be better off. Anyway, there are tons of opportunities on this campus, you know, lots of hotties. You just gotta get out there and get one!

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel really bad about it.

Your partner: Look, nobody is worth getting so worked up about. I mean, it's just not that big a deal. You can do a lot better. Face the fact that worrying isn't worth your trouble and stop being so depressed about the whole thing.

You: Yeah. I'm still really upset though.

Your partner: Well, it's pretty silly to feel so bad. You're an adult now. You should know that these things are a part of life—and you're crazy if you think this stuff doesn't happen all the time. I mean, it's just not smart to be so upset. No one is worth that much trouble.

011: High Severity Romantic Stressor/ MPC Comfort *(Label not shown to participants)*

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." When you check your voice mail one afternoon the message from your partner says, "We need to talk." Since it sounds serious you rush over to see what's wrong. When you arrive at your partner's apartment, he/she has an odd look on his/her face. Before you can ask what is wrong, your partner begins to speak, explaining that the relationship is not working out as planned and that it is now officially over. You are stunned and very hurt. You try to ask your partner about what has gone wrong, but your partner says that the reasons don't matter anyway since he/she has accepted an internship 600 miles away. You leave feeling shocked and more than a little crushed; this is about the most hurt you've ever felt in this kind of relationship.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner:	Hi! How are you doing?
You:	Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got dumped.
Your partner:	Yeah?
You:	Yeah, we just broke up! I really thought that we might be together forever. I can't believe this happened.
Your partner:	Really.
You:	Yeah, I feel terrible. I'm devastated.
Your partner:	Wow, that's really too bad. Relationships are so much trouble sometimes. It seems like most relationships don't last at this point in life.
You:	Yeah, I guess. But I still feel really bad about it.
Your partner:	Well, you know I'm really sorry you broke up. I wish it didn't have to be that way. But I can see how this happened. I mean, relationships aren't easy.
You:	Yeah. I'm still really upset though.
Your partner:	Look, let's get out of here. I know of a big party over on Carlotta Street tonight. There'll be lots of people there – especially the hotties. It should be a blast, and having some fun is just what you need right now. OK?

012: High Severity Romantic Stressor / HPC Comfort *(Label not shown to participants)*

Imagine that you have been dating someone seriously for two years. Your relationship is going well, you rarely have major disagreements, and you think that this person might be "the one." When you check your voice mail one afternoon the message from your partner says, "We need to talk." Since it sounds serious you rush over to see what's wrong. When you arrive at your partner's apartment, he/she has an odd look on his/her face. Before you can ask what is wrong, your partner begins to speak, explaining that the relationship is not working out as planned and that it is now officially over. You are stunned and very hurt. You try to ask your partner about what has gone wrong, but your partner says that the reasons don't matter anyway since he/she has accepted an internship 600 miles away. You leave feeling shocked and more than a little crushed; this is about the most hurt you've ever felt in this kind of relationship.

Later that day, you run into your relational partner. Below is your conversation with your relational partner.

Your partner: Hi! How are you doing?

You: Oh, hi. OK. Well, maybe not so OK. I just got dumped.

Your partner: Yeah?

You: Yeah, we just broke up! I really thought that we might be together forever. I can't believe this happened.

Your partner: Really.

You: Yeah, I feel terrible. I'm devastated.

Your partner: Sure. I understand. I mean, it's hard to figure everything out in a relationship. It's understandable that you are feeling so shocked and hurt since it's someone you really care about. It makes sense that you would be really upset about this.

You: Yeah, I guess. But I still feel really bad about it.

Your partner: Well, I understand you feel terrible right now. You have every right to feel really upset. I mean, breaking up with someone you care about is always hard. I sure hope that everything works out for you.

You: Yeah. I'm still really upset though.

Your partner: Well, it's a difficult situation to be in, that's for sure. I mean, that probably doesn't make you feel any better, but these things happen in relationships from time to time. Breaking up is never easy – you just have to figure out how to deal with these problems.

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APPENDIX D: STUDY 1 CONSENT LANGUAGE AND INSTRUMENTATION

Consent Language

This questionnaire asks you to provide your opinion about several matters related to yourself and communication, especially communication in relationships. This study is being conducted by researchers from the Department of Communication Studies at Louisiana State University. You will be asked to report on a current relationship you have (with a friend, family member, or intimate partner), read a conversation like the conversations you may have with this friend, and imagine how you would think and feel if this conversation had happened to you.

There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions appearing on the following pages. Rather, we are simply trying to learn what young adults such as you think about these matters. Your participation in this survey is important and will contribute to what we know about conversations in relationships.

For your responses to be maximally useful, it is important that you answer each question as honestly as you can. ***Please make sure you answer every question***. It should take no more than 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. We see no risks or discomforts associated with completing this questionnaire. You may choose to cease participating in this study at any time.

Your responses to this questionnaire will be combined with the responses of many other persons to generate a statistical profile of what young adults think about themselves and communication. ***All of your responses are strictly confidential***. No one will ever try to discover your identity. If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please contact Andrea J. Vickery at avicke4@lsu.edu Monday – Friday 12:00 – 5:00 PM or Graham D. Bodie at gbodie@lsu.edu.

If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landen, Ph.D., Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

By continuing this survey, you are giving consent to participate in this study.

General Study Instructions

In this study, you will be asked to think about a relational partner who you normally talk to about your problems. This can be any relational partner who you normally share your problems with, such as a family member (parent, sibling, other relative), a romantic partner (boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse), or a friend (roommate, best friend, or other friend). Please take a moment and identify ONE relational partner you would like to focus on in your responses today.

Now that you have identified your relational partner, you may see a _____ or "your relational partner" in questions. This represents the person you have identified, so you should think of them while you answer these questions.

1.) Partner Information

How long have you known _____? *Select one response*

Less than one year
1-2 years
2-3 years
3-4 years
4-5 years
5-10 years
More than 10 years

How would you describe your relationship with _____?
Please check all that apply

Aunt
Uncle
Cousin
Other Family Member
Mother
Father
Friend**
Boyfriend/Girlfriend*
Husband/Wife*
Other (open-ended textbox)

a.) CONDITIONAL QUESITON 1 (*) In months, How long have you and _____ been in a romantic relationship?
b.) CONDITIONAL QUESTION 2 (**) In months, how long have you and _____ been friends?

How long have you known _____ (in months)?
Open ended text box:
What is your relational partner's biological sex?
Male
Female

2.) Demographic Questions
What is your age?

[open-ended textbox]

What is your biological sex?

Male
Female

What is your year in school?

Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior
Graduate Student
Non-Degree Seeking

Are you a Communication Studies (CMST) Major?

Yes, I am a CMST Major

No, but I am a CMST Minor
No, and I am not a CMST Minor

How would you describe your ethnicity (Check all that apply)?

African American / Black
Asian
Caucasian / White
Chicano / Chicana
Hispanic
Latino / Latina
Middle Eastern
Native American
Pacific Islander
Other [accompanied by open-ended textbox]

3.) Pre- Conversation (Scenario) Measures

Please answer some questions about your relationship with _____.

General Support Seeking Measures **[This category name will not be visible to participants]**
Is _____ someone . . .

	Not at all						Very much so
With whom you share interests?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
To whom you self-disclose private information?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
From whom you seek help and support?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Pre-Conversation Responsiveness Questions **[This category name will not be visible to participants]**

My partner. . .

	Not at all				Very much
Sees the 'real' me	1	2	3	4	5
'Gets the facts' right about me	1	2	3	4	5
Focuses on the 'best side' of me	1	2	3	4	5
Is aware of what I am thinking and feeling	1	2	3	4	5
Understands me*	1	2	3	4	5
Really listens to me	1	2	3	4	5
Expresses liking and encouragement for me	1	2	3	4	5
Values my abilities and opinions*	1	2	3	4	5
Respects me	1	2	3	4	5
Is responsive to my needs	1	2	3	4	5
Makes me feel cared for*	1	2	3	4	5

*items used in *Gable, S. L., Gosnell, C. L., Maisel, N. C., & Strachman, A. (2012). Safely testing the alarm: Close others' responses to personal positive events. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103, 963-981. doi: 10.1037/a0029488*

Remaining items described in *Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006). Will you be there for me when things go right? Supportive responses to positive event disclosures. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91, 904-917. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.91.5.904*

Pre-Conversation Perceived Relationship Quality **[This category name will not be visible to participants, nor will the label in italics below]**

Please rate your current partner and relationship on each item.

	Not at all						Extremely
Relationship Satisfaction							
How satisfied are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How content are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How happy are you with your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Commitment							
How committed are you to your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How dedicated are you to your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How devoted are you to your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Intimacy							
How intimate is your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How close is your relationship?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How connected are you to your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trust							
How much do you trust your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much can you count on your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How dependable is your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Love							
How much do you love your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you adore your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How much do you cherish your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Liking (Written for this study)							
How much do you like your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How fond are you of your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How attracted are you to your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Fletcher, G. J. O., Simpson, J. A., & Thomas, G. (2000). The measurement of perceived relationship quality components: A confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*, 340-354. doi: 10.1177/0146167200265007

Closeness

The following questions refer to your relationship with _____. Please think about your relationship with _____ when responding to the following questions. Please respond to the following statements using this scale:

Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly agree
_____ and I do a lot of things together	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
_____ and I want to spend time together	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When I have free time I choose to spend it alone with _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
_____ and I have a strong connection	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think about _____ a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My relationship with ____ is close	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My relationship with _____ is important in my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
_____ and I disclose important things to each other	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I consider _____ when making important decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
_____ is a priority in my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When we are apart, I miss _____ a great deal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I'm sure of my relationship with _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Dibble, J. L., Levine, T. R., & Park, H. S. (2012). The unidimensional relationship closeness scale (URCS): Reliability and validity evidence for a new measure of relationship closeness. *Psychological Assessment, 24*, 565-572. doi: 10.1037/a0026265

Communication Functions Questionnaire

Instructions: Below are descriptions of several different kinds of communication skills. Please read through the description carefully. Then, fill in the circle on your answer sheet for the response which best represents your feelings regarding ***how important it would be for a very close friend to possess the communication skill***. Make sure the numbers on the answer sheet and this questionnaire correspond. The items refer to how important you *generally* think these communication behaviors and outcomes are in very close friendships. For each item please use the following scale:

Somewhat Important 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Important

For example, consider the following item:

"Has the ability to make me believe I have the qualities people will like."

If you think this would be an important or extremely important skill for a very close friend to possess, you would choose “4" or "5." If you think this would be a moderately important skill for a very close friend to possess, you would choose "3." Finally, if you think this would be only a somewhat important skill for a very close friend to possess, you would choose "1" or "2." Please make certain that you read and rate each item.

1. Can help me work through my emotions when I'm feeling upset or depressed.
2. Comforts me when I am feeling sad or depressed.
3. Helps make me feel better when I'm hurt or depressed about something
4. Is open in expressing her/his thoughts and feelings to me.
5. Lets me know what's going on in his/her world.
6. Shares his/her joys, as well as sorrows, with me.

Burleson, B. R., & Samter, W. (1990). Effects of cognitive complexity on the perceived importance of communication skills in friends. *Communication Research, 17*, 165-182. doi: 10.1177/009365090017002002

Conversation Scenario

The following instructions precede each conversation:

Instructions: Below is a situation that might be experienced by college students. We are asking that you assume this situation is happening to you. You will be asked to imagine an encounter with ***your relational partner.***

001 – Low Stress Test, LPC
002 – Low Stress Test, MPC
003 – Low Stress Test, HPC
004 – High Stress test, LPC
005 – High Stress test, MPC
006 – high stress test, HPC
007 – low stress romance, LPC
008 – low stress romance, MPC
009 – low stress romance, HPC
010 – high stress romance, LPC
011 – high stress romance, MPC
012 – high stress romance, HPC

4.) Post-Conversation Responsiveness Items

Pre-Conversation Responsiveness Questions - *Same items in pre-conversation measures, verb tense changed.* [This category name will not be visible to participants]

My partner. . .

	Not at all				Very much
Saw the ‘real’ me	1	2	3	4	5

'Got the facts' right about me	1	2	3	4	5
Focused on the 'best side' of me	1	2	3	4	5
Was aware of what I was thinking and feeling	1	2	3	4	5
Understood me*	1	2	3	4	5
Really listened to me	1	2	3	4	5
Expressed liking and encouragement for me	1	2	3	4	5
Valued my abilities and opinions*	1	2	3	4	5
Respected me	1	2	3	4	5
Was responsive to my needs	1	2	3	4	5
Made me feel cared for*	1	2	3	4	5

*items used in *Gable, S. L., Gosnell, C. L., Maisel, N. C., & Strachman, A. (2012). Safely testing the alarm: Close others' responses to personal positive events. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103, 963-981. doi: 10.1037/a0029488*

Remaining items described in *Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006). Will you be there for me when things go right? Supportive responses to positive event disclosures. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91, 904-917. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.91.5.904*

Post Conversation Perceived Relationship Quality – Content of questions based on pre-conversation measures, scaling from the Iowa Communication Record **[This category name will not be visible to participants]**

Indicate the extent to which this conversation resulted in a change in . . .

	Negative change			No change			Positive change
How close you are to _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Your intimacy with _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Your satisfaction with your relationship with __	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
How much you trust _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
How much you love _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
How much you like _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
How committed you are towards ___	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Your relationship with _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Your feelings towards _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Your attraction towards _____	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Scaling of questions based on Duck et al Iowa Communication Record.

Duck, S., Rutt, D. J., Hoy Hurst, M., & Strejc, H. (1991). Some evident truths about conversations in everyday relationships: All communications are not created equal. *Human Communication Research, 18*, 228-267. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.1991.tb00545.x

Relational Communication Measures **[This category name will not be visible to participants]**

All items measured on the following scale 1 = Strong disagree 7 = Strongly Agree

Immediacy							
My partner was intensely involved in conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner found the conversation stimulating.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner showed enthusiasm while talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner acted bored (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Affect							
My partner communicated coldness rather than warmth. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was interested in talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner did not want a deeper relationship between us. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was not attracted to me (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner created a sense of distance between us (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Similarity/Depth							
My partner acted like we were good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner seemed to desire further communication.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner acted very friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner made me feel like he or she was very similar to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Receptivity/Trust							
My partner was very honest in communicating with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was willing to listen to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was sincere.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was open to my ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Composure							
My partner felt very tense talking to me. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner felt very relaxed talking to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner was calm and poised with me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner seemed nervous in my presence. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Formality							
My partner made the interaction very formal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner wanted the discussion to be casual. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Dominance							
My partner tried to persuade me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner tried to dominate me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner did NOT attempt to influence me. (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner tried to control the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Equality							
My partner considered us equals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My partner did NOT treat me as an equal (RC)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Involvement							
How involved or uninvolved was your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How attentive or distracted was your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How interested or indifferent was your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Items from: Dillard, J. P., Solomon, D. H., & Palmer, M. T. (1999). Structuring the concept of relational communication. *Communication Monographs, 66*, 49-65, features originally presented in Burgoon, J. K., & Hale, J. L. (1987). Validation and measurement of the fundamental themes of relational communication. *Communication Monographs, 54*, 19-41.

Relational Framing Measure [This category name will not be visible to participants]
Imagine that you have been given several different kinds of materials: wax paper, sand paper, velvet, a rubber eraser, and a brick, and asked to feel the surface of each of the different materials. Your task is to judge the relevance of each word pair to making a judgement about the materials.
Rough/Smooth
Loud/Quiet
Hard/Soft
High-Pitched/Low-Pitched

Most people would say that the Rough/Smooth and Hard/Soft dimensions were relevant to the task and that the Loud/Quite and High-Pitched/Low-Pitched dimensions were irrelevant; indeed you are feeling and not hearing the materials. Note that you are not evaluating how rough, smooth, etc. the surfaces are, just indicating whether the dimensions defined by the word pair is relevant to evaluating those surfaces irrespective of their roughness or hardness.
Using this analogy, we have included below a list of dimensions that may be more or less relevant for coming to conclusions about the conversation you just had. We would like you to rate the relevance of each dimension with 1 meaning completely irrelevant and 5 meaning completely relevant.

	1 = Completely Irrelevant				5=Completely Relevant
Attraction/Aversion	1	2	3	4	5
Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
Controlling/Yielding	1	2	3	4	5
Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
Dominance/Submission	1	2	3	4	5
Positive Regard/Negative Regard	1	2	3	4	5
Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
Coaxing/Giving In	1	2	3	4	5
Demanding/Relenting	1	2	3	4	5
Caring/Indifference	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly/Unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5

Message Evaluation Items [This category name will not be visible to participants]
To what extent do you think that the behavior of your conversational partner was . . .
Problem-Solving Utility

*Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	Hurtful
*Knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	Ignorant
*Generous	1	2	3	4	5	Selfish
*Useful	1	2	3	4	5	Useless

Relational Assurance						
*Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	Unsupportive
*Encouraging	1	2	3	4	5	Discouraging
*Comforting	1	2	3	4	5	Distressing
*Reassuring	1	2	3	4	5	Upsetting
Emotional Awareness						
*Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	Insensitive
*Compassionate	1	2	3	4	5	Heartless
*Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	Misunderstanding
*Considerate	1	2	3	4	5	Inconsiderate
General Evaluation						
Normal	1	2	3	4	5	Weird
Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Ineffective
Unrealistic	1	2	3	4	5	Realistic
Natural	1	2	3	4	5	Unnatural
Phony	1	2	3	4	5	Genuine
Typical	1	2	3	4	5	Unusual
Appropriate	1	2	3	4	5	Inappropriate

* These items are from: Goldsmith, D. J., McDermott, V. M., & Alexander, S. C. (2000). Helpful, supportive, and sensitive: Measuring the evaluation of enacted support in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*, 369-391. 10.1177/0265407500173004

Message Outcomes

	Strongly Disagree (1)						Strongly Agree (7)
I feel better after talking with my _____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Talking to my _____ helps me get my mind off my problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My _____ made me feel better about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel more optimistic after talking with my _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My _____ doesn't seem to think I can handle my own problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It helped me to understand the situation better to talk it over with my _____	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My _____ seemed really concerned about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My ____'s comments were appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I felt that my _____ was putting me down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I wish my _____'s comments had been briefer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Clark, R. A., Pierce, A. J., Finn, K., Hsu, K., Toosley, A., & Williams, L. (1998). The impact of alternative approaches to comforting, closeness of relationship, and gender on multiple measures of effectiveness. Communication Studies, 43, 224-239. doi: 10.1080/10510979809368533

Support Seeking Measures **[This category name will not be visible to participants]**

	Not at all			Very much so
I was not looking for any support from _____.	1	2	3	4
I was open to support from _____ but wasn't expecting it.	1	2	3	4
I was looking for some support from _____.	1	2	3	4
I was counting on _____ to provide me with support.	1	2	3	4

Gable, S. L., Gosnell, C. L., Maisel, N. C., & Strachman, A. (2012). Safely testing the alarm: Close others' responses to personal positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*, 963-981. doi: 10.1037/a0029488

Other Evaluation Items

The conversation content will be displayed again.

From the conversation, type the single response best represents how your relational partner would respond in a conversation like this.

[open ended question]

What did _____ mean by this response?

[open ended question]

What my relational partner said made me feel . . .

More close to my partner	1	2	3	4	5	Less close to my partner
More trusting of my partner	1	2	3	4	5	Less trusting of my partner
More satisfied with my relationship	1	2	3	4	5	Less satisfied with my relationship
More intimate with my partner	1	2	3	4	5	Less intimate with my partner
More love towards my partner	1	2	3	4	5	Less love towards my partner
More committed to my partner	1	2	3	4	5	Less committed to my partner
Like my partner more	1	2	3	4	5	Like my partner less

Attachment Style Choice [Label not visible to participants]

The following are four general relationship styles that people often report. Please read each one and rate the extent to which you think it corresponds to your ***general style in romantic relationships***. Please use the following scale and place a number between 1 and 5 in the space provided beside each description.

1---------2---------3---------4---------5

Not at all like me **Very much like me**

(A) _____ It is easy for me to become emotionally close to others. I am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being alone or having others not accept me.

(B) _____ I am not comfortable getting close to others. I want emotionally close relationships, but I find it difficult to trust others completely, or to depend on them. I worry that I will be hurt if I allow myself to become too close to others.

(C) _____ I want to be completely emotionally intimate with others, but I often find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I am uncomfortable being without close relationships, but I sometimes worry that others don't value me as much as I value them.

(D) _____ I am comfortable without close emotional relationships. It is very important to me to feel independent and self-sufficient, and I prefer not to depend on others or have others depend on me.

Looking back over the four descriptions you just read, which one **BEST** describes how you generally feel in relationships? Please circle the letter below that corresponds to the one description that **BEST** fits, or is closest to, the way you generally are in your romantic relationships.

THE DESCRIPTION THAT BEST FITS ME IS....

A B C D

Bartholomew, K., & Horowitz, L. M. (1991). Attachment styles among young adults: A test of a four-category model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61,* 226-244. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.61.2.226

Role Category Questionnaire

Role Category Questionnaire

Our interest in this questionnaire is to learn how people describe others whom they know. Our concern here is with the habits, 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 other identifying symbol for a person of your acquaintance who fits into that category. Be sure to use a different person for each category.

1. A person your own age whom you like. _____

2. A person your own age 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, and any other 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 them.

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. Do not simply put down those characteristics that distinguish him/her from others on your list, but include any characteristics that he/she shares with others as well as characteristics that are unique to him/her. 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. <u>Please spend only about five (5) minutes describing him/her.</u>

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. Do not simply put down those characteristics that distinguish him/her from others on your list, but include any characteristics that he/she shares with others as well as characteristics that are unique to him/her. 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. <u>Please spend only about five (5) minutes describing him/her.</u>

This person is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E: STUDY 1 RESULTS: FIGURES

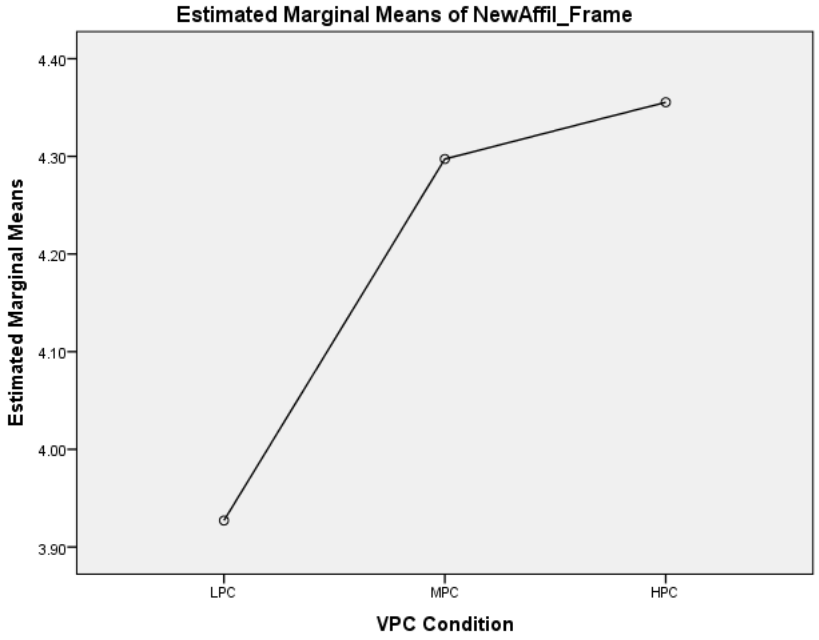


Figure E.1: Affiliation Framing

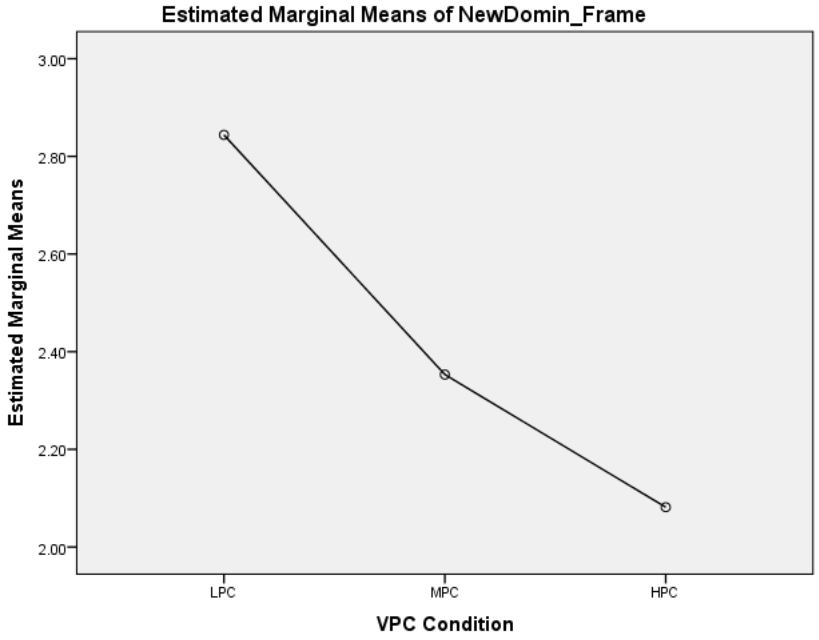


Figure E.2: Dominance Framing

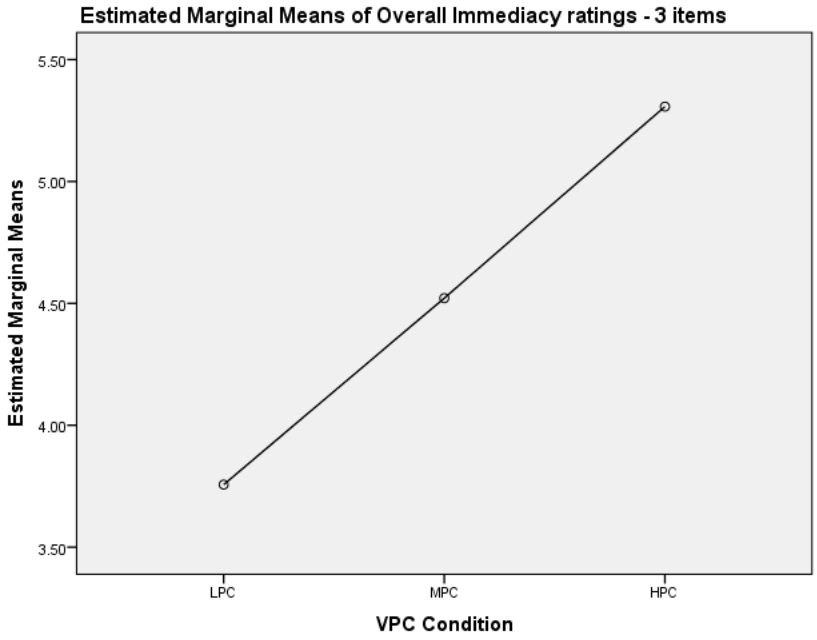


Figure E.3: Affect Ratings

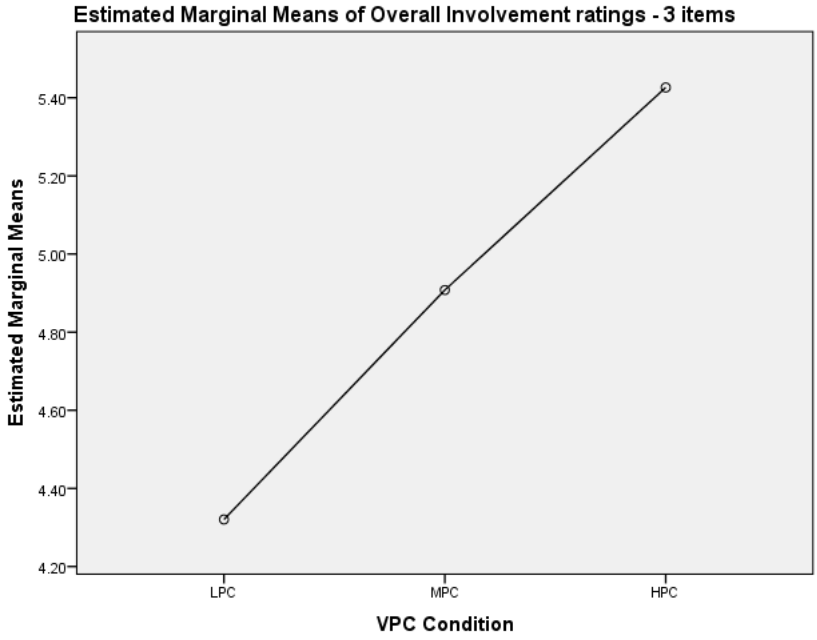


Figure E.4: Immediacy Ratings

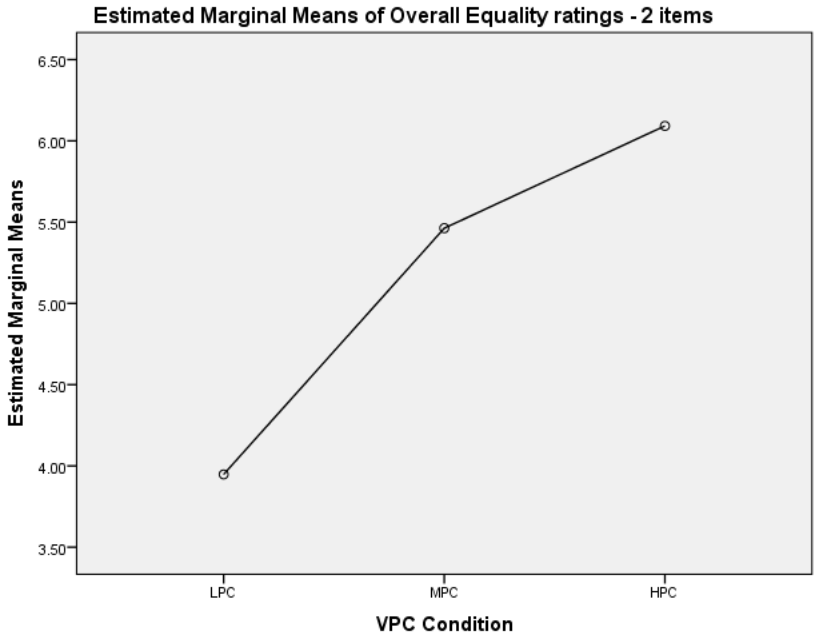


Figure E.5: Equality Ratings

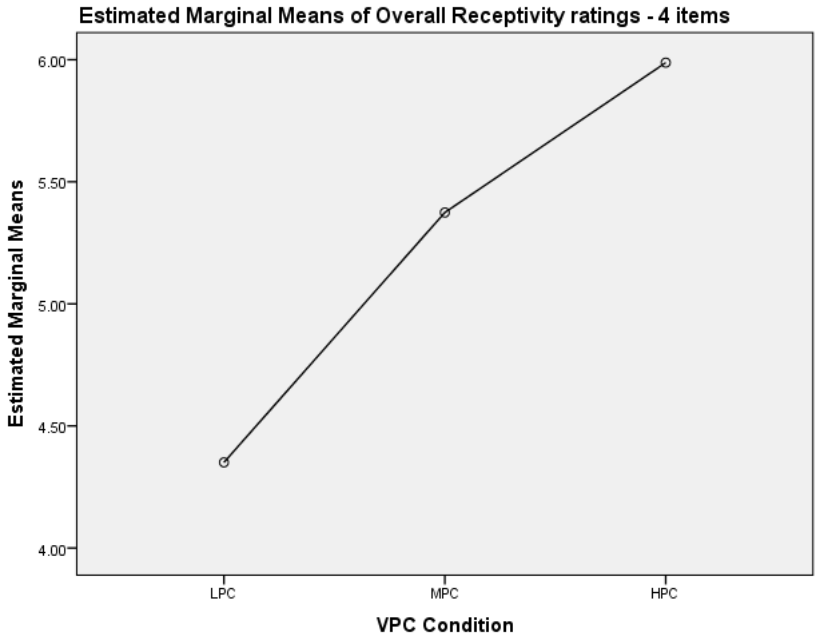


Figure E.6: Receptivity Ratings

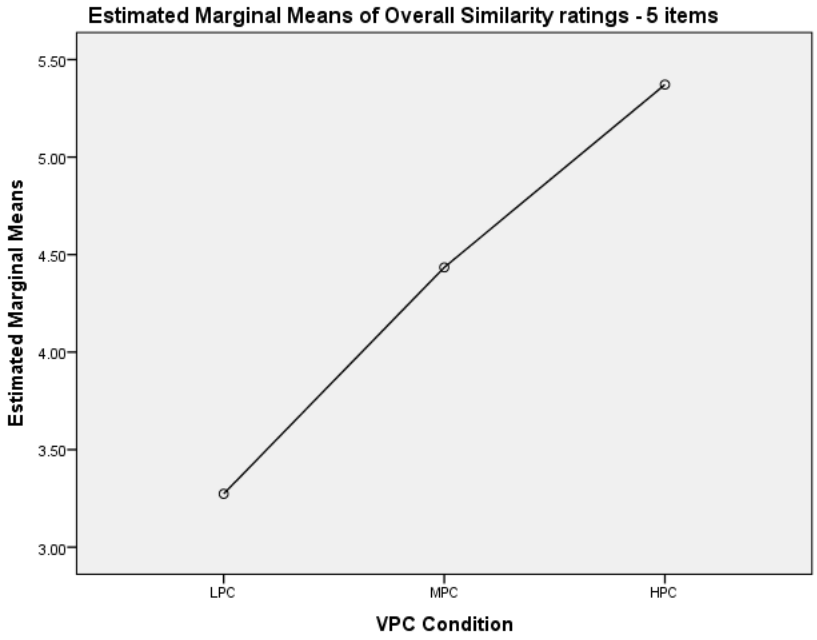


Figure E.7: Similarity Ratings

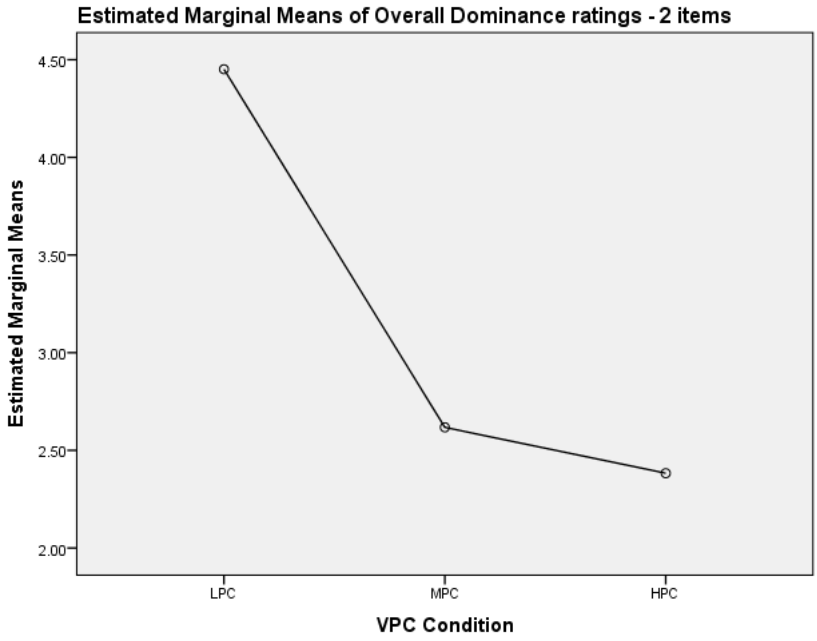


Figure E.8: Dominance Ratings

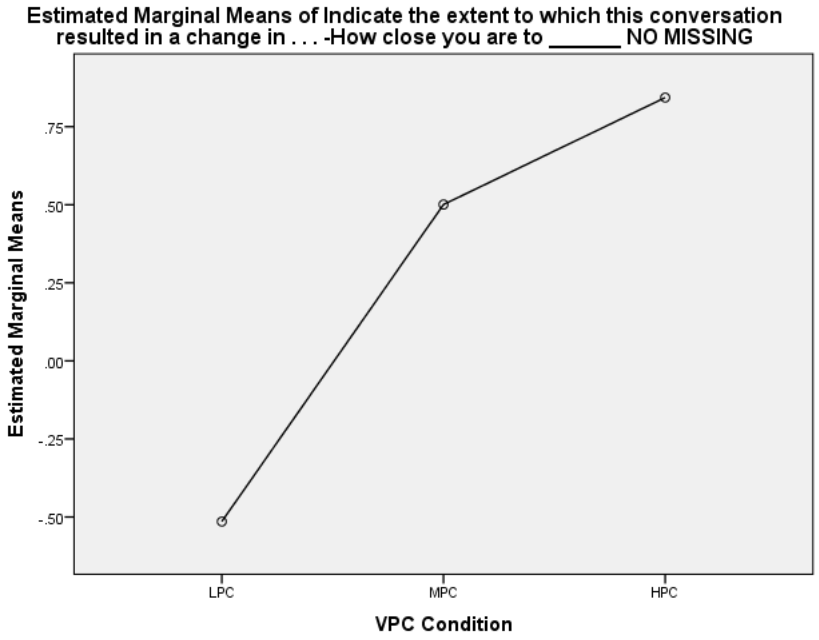


Figure E.9: Closeness

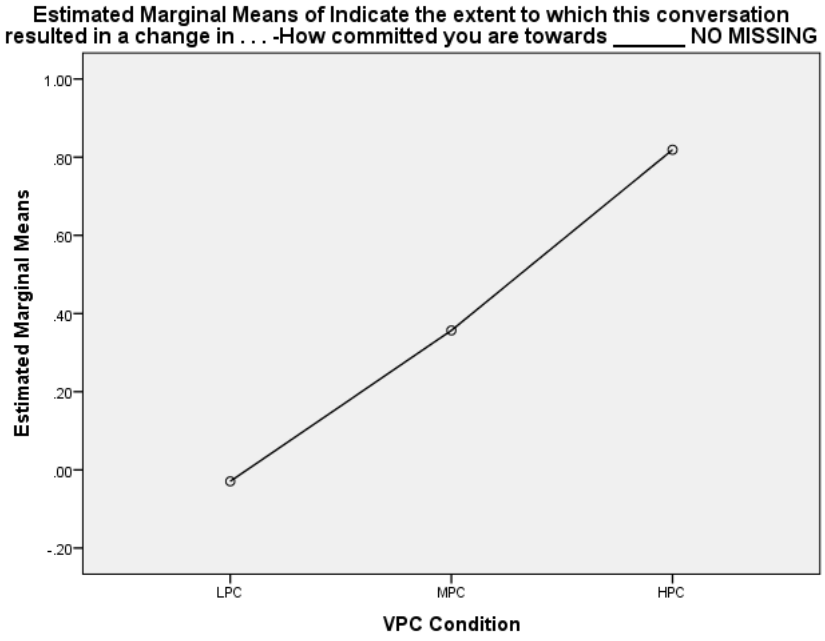


Figure E.10: Commitment

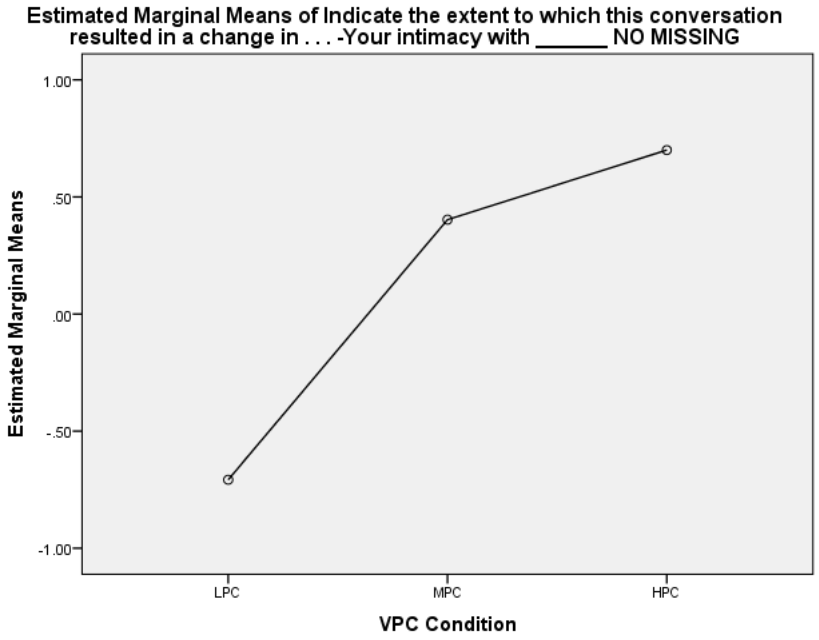


Figure E.11: Intimacy

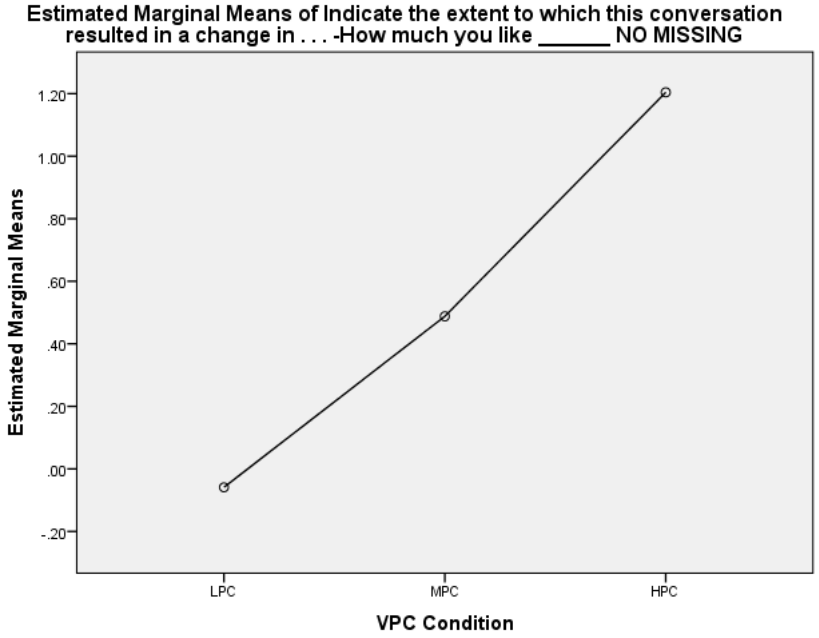


Figure E.12: Liking

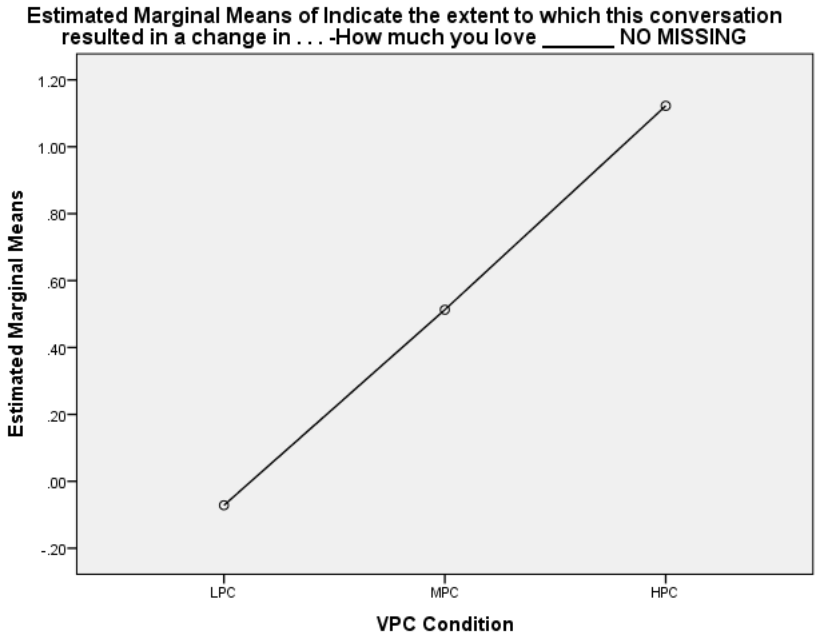


Figure E.13: Loving

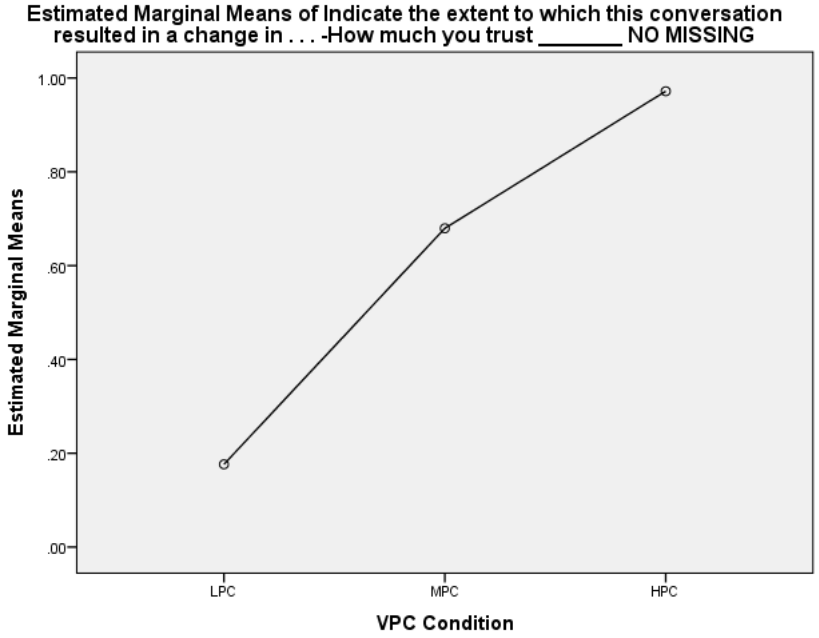


Figure E.14: Trust

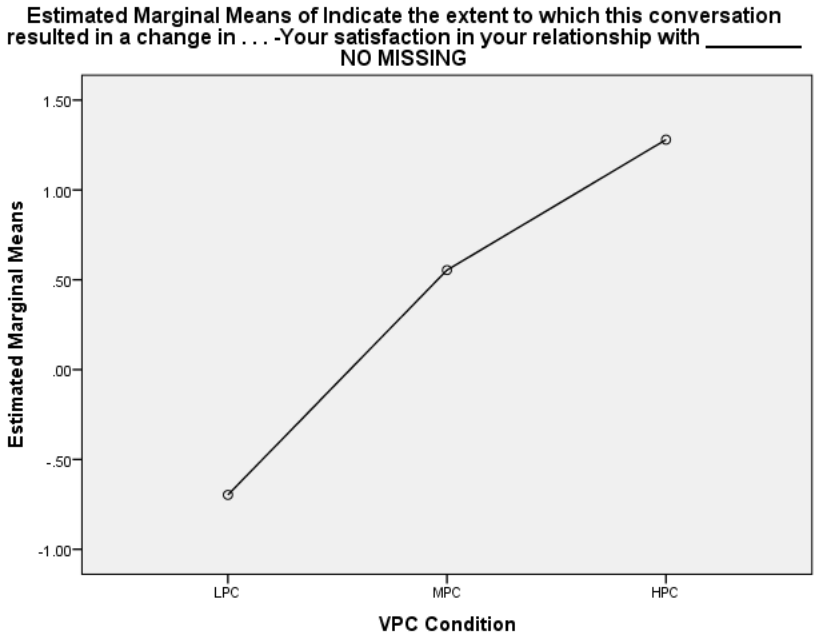


Figure E.15: Satisfaction

APPENDIX F: STUDY 1 ADDITIONAL RESULTS: MESSAGE EFFECTS

Message evaluations (ME). Message evaluations were represented by helpfulness, sensitivity, and supportiveness (Goldsmith et al., 2000); the subscales for message evaluations had acceptable reliability (helpfulness α = .90; sensitivity α = .93; supportiveness α = .95). The 3 (VPC) x 2 (Severity) factorial ANOVAs on the three dependent message evaluation variables revealed main and interaction effects for stressor severity on message evaluations.

There was a statistically supported interaction effect for VPC x Severity on ratings of *helpfulness*, F (2, 117) = 5.10, p = .008, partial η^2= .05. Decomposition of this interaction utilizing polynomial linear trend analysis revealed less severe stressors, F (2, 57) = 9.97, p < .001, partial η^2= .26 did not account for as much variance compared to more severe stressors, F (2, 117) = 36.44 p < .001, partial η^2= .56

There was also a significant interaction effect for VPC x Severity on ratings of *sensitivity*, F (2, 117) = 3.5, p = .033. Decomposition of this interaction utilizing polynomial linear trend analysis revealed less severe stressors, F (2, 57) = 21.16, p < .001, partial η^2= .43, did not account for as much variance compared to more severe stressors, F (2, 117) = 30.78, p < .001, partial η^2= .52

There was also a significant interaction effect for ratings of *supportiveness*, F (2, 117) = 3.29, p = .041, partial η^2= .02. Decomposition of this interaction utilizing polynomial linear trend analysis revealed less severe stressors F (2, 57) = 32.51, p < .001, partial η^2= .53, did not account for as much variance compared to more severe stressors, F (2, 117) = 46.68, p < .001, partial η^2= .62.

Message outcomes (MO). Message outcomes were represented by affect improvement (Clark et al., 1996). The affect improvement variable had acceptable reliability (α = .95). The 3 (VPC) x2 (Severity) factorial ANOVA revealed a main effect for severity, F (1, 117) = 13.10, p

< .001, partial = .06. Emotional improvement scores were higher in less severe stressors (m = 4.79, sd = 1.77) compared to more severe stressors (m = 3.84, sd = 1.94), t (118) = 2.81, p = .006, d = .51, r^2 = .24.

The VPC x Severity interaction was not significant (p = .24). However, these effects were decomposed using polynomial linear trend analyses to explore if the predictions of the dual-process theory were observed. Less severe stressors, F (2, 57) = 18.62, p < .001, partial η^2= .39, accounted for less variance compared to more severe stressors, F (2, 57) = 21.87, p < .001, partial η^2= .43 (see Table F.1).

Table F.1: ME and MO by VPC Comforting Quality

DV	LPC	MPC	HPC	η^2
	LESS SEVERE STRESSORS			
Helpful	3.17 (1.08) $_{B, C}$	4.16 (0.68) $_{A}$	4.29 (0.77) $_{A}$	.26
Sensitive	2.44 (1.19) $_{B, C}$	4.38 (0.63) $_{A}$	4.51 (0.83) $_{A}$	.43
Supportive	2.71 (1.00) $_{B, C}$	4.09 (0.62) $_{A}$	4.30 (0.84) $_{A}$	.53
Affect Improvement	3.25 (1.69) $_{B, C}$	5.33 (1.19) $_{A}$	5.79 (1.27) $_{A}$	.39
	MORE SEVERE STRESSORS			
Helpful	2.29 (0.70) $_{B, C}$	3.24 (0.98) $_{A, C}$	4.40 (0.63) $_{A, B}$	**.56**
Sensitive	2.06 (0.90) $_{B, C}$	3.22 (1.24) $_{A, C}$	4.45 (0.64) $_{A, B}$	**.52**
Supportive	1.87 (0.93) $_{B, C}$	3.45 (1.12) $_{A, C}$	4.60 (0.52) $_{A, B}$	**.62**
Affect Improvement	2.29 (1.41) $_{B, C}$	3.83 (1.76) $_{A, C}$	5.39 (1.23) $_{A, B}$	**.43**

Notes: $_{A}$ denotes difference from LPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{B}$ denotes difference from MPC comfort at $p < .05$, $_{C}$ denotes difference from HPC comfort at $p < .05$. *** Linear effect significant at $p < .001$, ** Linear effect significant at $p < .01$, * Linear effect significant at $p < .05$.

APPENDIX G: STUDY 2 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Application for Approval of Projects Which Use Human Subjects

This application is used for projects/studies that cannot be reviewed through the exemption process.

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include two copies of the competed application as well as parts A-E, listed below. Once the application is completed, please submit to the IRB Office for review and please allow ample time for the application to be reviewed Expedited reviews usually takes 2 weeks. Carefully completed applications should be submitted 3 weeks before a meeting to ensure a prompt decision.

– A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of part B thru E.
(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php.)
(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (http://www.lsu.edu/irb/IRB%20Security%20of%20Data.pdf)

1) Principal Investigator*: Graham D. Bodie, Ph. D. **Rank** Assistant Professor
*PI **must be** an LSU Faculty Member

Dept: CMST **Ph:** 86683 **E-mail:** gbodie@lsu.edu

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
Andrea Vickery, Graduate Student, 8-0249, avicke4@lsu.edu

IRB# 5139 LSU Proposal # 37326
○ Full
⊗ Expedited
⊗ Human Subjects Training
⊗ Complete Application

3) Project Title: Disclosing and Listening to Upsetting Events

4) Proposal Start Date: 11/29/2010 **5) Proposed Duration Months:** 12

6) Number of Subjects Requested: 180 **7) LSU Proposal #:** 36983-2

8) Funding Sought From: Board of Regents

ASSURANCE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR named above
I accept personal responsibility for the conduct of this study (including ensuring compliance of co-investigators/co-workers) in accordance with the documents submitted herewith and the following guidelines for human subject protection: The Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance (FWA00003892) with OHRP and 45 CFR 46 (available from http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I also understand that copies of all consent forms **must be maintained at LSU for three years after the completion of the project.** If I leave LSU before that time, the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Signature of PI _____ Date 11/18/10

ASSURANCE OF STUDENT/PROJECT COORDINATOR named above. If multiple Co-Investigators, please create a "signature page" for all Co-Investigators to sign. Attach the "signature page" to the application.

I agree to adhere to the terms of this document and am familiar with the documents referenced above.

Signature of Co-PI (s) Andrea J Vickery Date 11/18/2010

Study Approved By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Approval Expires: 11-30-2011

ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

TO: Graham Bodie
Communication Studies

FROM: Robert C. Mathews
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: September 9, 2013
RE: **IRB#** 3232
TITLE: Disclosing and Listening to Upsetting Events in Friendships

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: Modification

Brief Modification Description: See file

Review type: Full ___ Expedited __X__ **Review date:** 9/10/2013

Risk Factor: Minimal ___X___ Uncertain _____ Greater Than Minimal_____

Approved___X___ **Disapproved** _____

Approval Date: 9/10/2013 **Approval Expiration Date:** 1/14/2014

Re-review frequency: (annual unless otherwise stated)

Number of subjects approved: 80

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable) _____

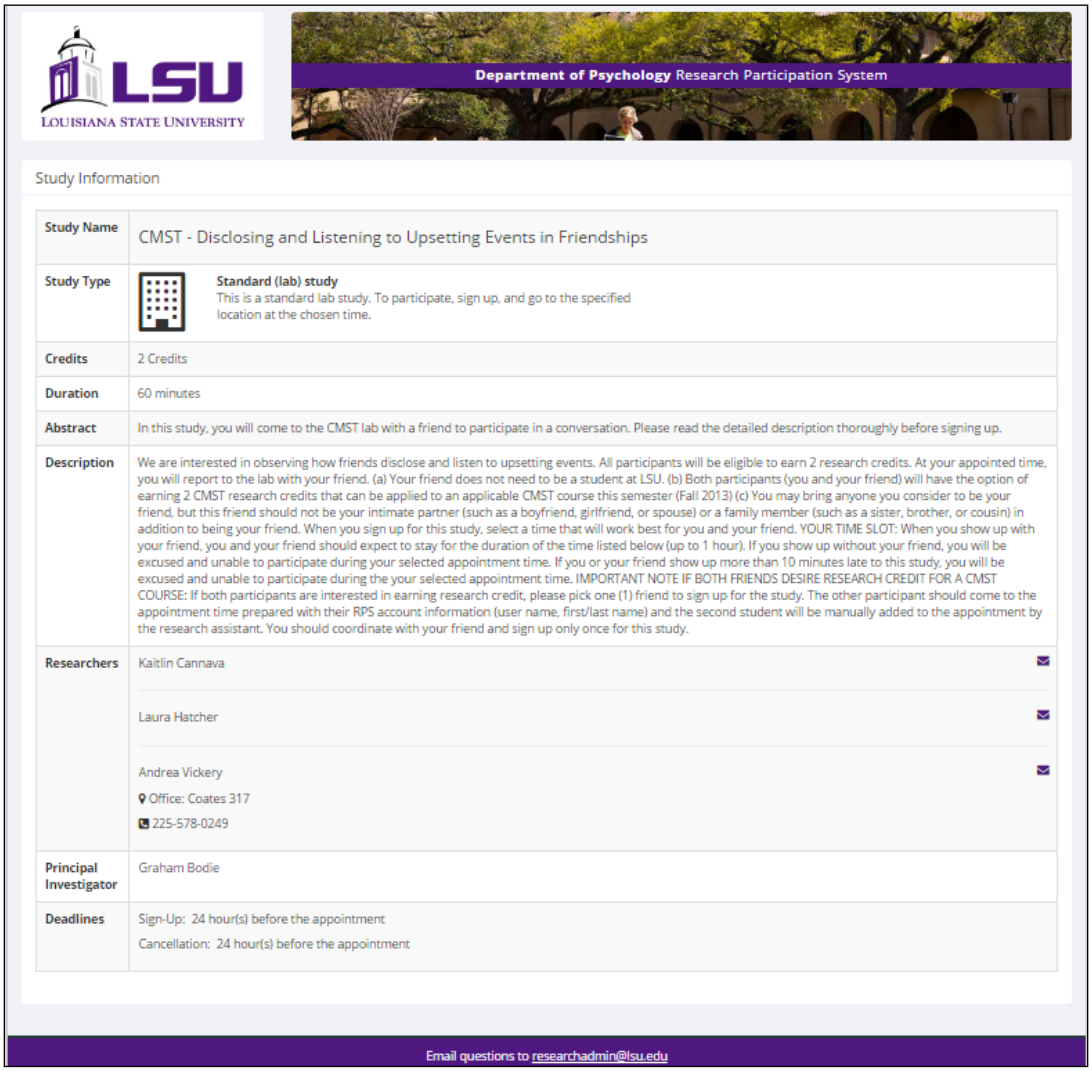
By: Robert C. Mathews, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

**All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/irb*

APPENDIX H: STUDY 2 RECRUITMENT AND ADVERTISEMENT



LSU
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology Research Participation System

Study Information

Study Name	CMST - Disclosing and Listening to Upsetting Events in Friendships
Study Type	**Standard (lab) study** This is a standard lab study. To participate, sign up, and go to the specified location at the chosen time.
Credits	2 Credits
Duration	60 minutes
Abstract	In this study, you will come to the CMST lab with a friend to participate in a conversation. Please read the detailed description thoroughly before signing up.
Description	We are interested in observing how friends disclose and listen to upsetting events. All participants will be eligible to earn 2 research credits. At your appointed time, you will report to the lab with your friend. (a) Your friend does not need to be a student at LSU. (b) Both participants (you and your friend) will have the option of earning 2 CMST research credits that can be applied to an applicable CMST course this semester (Fall 2013) (c) You may bring anyone you consider to be your friend, but this friend should not be your intimate partner (such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse) or a family member (such as a sister, brother, or cousin) in addition to being your friend. When you sign up for this study, select a time that will work best for you and your friend. YOUR TIME SLOT: When you show up with your friend, you and your friend should expect to stay for the duration of the time listed below (up to 1 hour). If you show up without your friend, you will be excused and unable to participate during your selected appointment time. If you or your friend show up more than 10 minutes late to this study, you will be excused and unable to participate during the your selected appointment time. IMPORTANT NOTE IF BOTH FRIENDS DESIRE RESEARCH CREDIT FOR A CMST COURSE: If both participants are interested in earning research credit, please pick one (1) friend to sign up for the study. The other participant should come to the appointment time prepared with their RPS account information (user name, first/last name) and the second student will be manually added to the appointment by the research assistant. You should coordinate with your friend and sign up only once for this study.
Researchers	Kaitlin Cannava Laura Hatcher Andrea Vickery Office: Coates 317 225-578-0249
Principal Investigator	Graham Bodie
Deadlines	Sign-Up: 24 hour(s) before the appointment Cancellation: 24 hour(s) before the appointment

Email questions to researchadmin@lsu.edu

Text of email sent to participants within 24 hours of signing up for the study. Emails were addressed to the student name (shown as a blank in the text below).

Hello _____,

You have signed up for the study entitled " Disclosing & Listening to Upsetting Events in Friendships." I am emailing to make sure that you understand the specifics of our study prior to your arrival at your scheduled time:

In order to get credit for this study, you must show up to your appointed time with a person who you consider to be your friend. Your friend must be 18 years of age or older. Both you and your friend have the opportunity of earning two CMST research credits for participating. You may bring anyone you consider to be your friend, but this friend should not be your intimate partner (such as a boyfriend, girlfriend, or spouse) or a family member (such as a sister, brother, or cousin) in addition to being your friend. The study will take approximately one hour, and both you and your friend must plan to stay for the full duration of the study.

If you show up without your friend, or if either you or your friend show up more than 10 minutes late to your appointment time, regrettably we will not be able to run the study, so you and your friends will not receive any compensation. I understand that things do come up, and you are able to cancel your appointment up to 24 hours in advance.

Please note that you and your friend should enter Coates from the main entrance (facing the union). Once you are in Coates, proceed downstairs to the basement where B17 is located.

Should you have any questions that were not covered in the RPS information or in this email, please let me know and I will answer them. I look forward to meeting you and your friend at your scheduled appointment time!

Thanks,

Andrea

APPENDIX I: STUDY 2 INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

1. Study Title: **Disclosing and Listening to Upsetting Events in Friendships**

2. Performance Site: Communication Studies Matchbox Interaction Lab

3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,
M-Th, 10:00 a.m. - 4:30p.m.
Dr. Graham Bodie, 225-578-6683 (gbodie@lsu.edu)

4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to investigate how people disclose about and listen to recent stressful events.

5. Subject Inclusion: Since stressful events are a normal part of the college student's experience, all students qualify for inclusion.

6. Number of subjects: 250

7. Study Procedures: Students are instructed to identify one friend who can come to the lab for an interaction study. Students and their friends come to the lab at an assigned time. Once in the lab, friends will be randomly assigned to either disclose a recent, personal problem or to listen to that disclosure. All participants will be asked to complete a pre-conversation survey. After the pre-conversation survey, the listener and discloser will be seated in an interaction room where a video camera will record the 5-minute conversation. After the conversation, both participants will complete a post-conversation survey. The recorded conversation will be evaluated for listening cues by a second set of students. To ensure that the conversation will be evaluated by an unfamiliar person, LSU conversations will be evaluated by students at a university located in the upper Midwest United States.

8. Benefits: Subjects can earn two research participation credits toward their CMST course grade for their participation. After the study is completed, interested participants will also be given access to information that might help them cope better with problems. Those interested should notify the research assistant of their interest.

9. Risks: The only study risk is the inadvertent release of sensitive information obtained from the interviews or surveys. However, every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your study records. First, your name will not be included on any of the survey material. Instead, each participant will be identified only by a number. These numbers will only be associated with names in a separate file; once we have matched all data obtained from each participant that file will be destroyed and never associated with data. All data files will be kept in a secure and locked office on a secure computer to which only the principle investigator has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

Front Page of Informed Consent Form

12. Signatures:
The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Institutional Review Board,(225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature:_____ Date:_____

I give the following permissions with respect to my video recorded data (please check all that apply):

___ Use is granted for purposes of coding by trained research assistants.

___ Use is granted for purposes of rating by untrained observers (e.g., other students).

___ Use is granted for purposes of illustration in presentations to academic conferences.

___ Use is granted for pedagogical purposes (e.g., showing videos as examples of supportive conversations).

STUDY APPROVED BY:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
130 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 / www.lsu.edu/irb
Approval Expires: 1/14/2014

Back Page of Informed Consent Form

APPENDIX J: STUDY 2 RESEARCH ASSISTANT SCRIPT

Research Assistant Script (Friends)

I. All participants, upon individual arrival:
We will be using B17 (the room closest to the stairs; the interaction room) as the meeting room. The door to B16 (the observation room) should be closed and participants should be seated at a chair located at the round table in the far corner.

Actions:

- Prep all material prior to any participant arriving
    - Have one consent form on a clipboard at each chair
    - Make sure all material has the correct participant number on each page!!!
- Greet each participant and make sure s/he is in the right place
- If the student has brought a friend, then they can complete this study; if not, they need to be directed that they can complete an alternative study available on the RPS.
- Have qualified participants read and sign a consent form

II. Assigning roles: (5 min)

To the Participants:

"Thank you again for your participation today. My name is [state your name] and this is [introduce other RA] and we will be directing you through the study today."

"To make sure that I cover everything I will read from this script now. Let me first outline the three parts of the study that were covered in your consent form:

1. In the first part of the study you will be asked to fill out a packet of information.
2. In the second part of the study one of you will be asked to talk about a personal event and one of you will be asked to listen to that information. The conversation will be videotaped and will last five minutes.
3. In the final part of the study you will be asked to evaluate the conversation.

Does that sound fine with you guys?"

Assigning Roles

"Before we begin, I want to randomly assign you your roles for the conversation, that is who will be the one who gets to pick the topic and talk about it and who gets to respond."

Approach the person who sits in the left chair and have him/her choose one slip from a container. GREEN = LISTENER; PINK = DISCLOSER]

[MAKE SURE to check off who is the Listener and who is the Discloser on check sheet!!!!]

"Let me please see the slip. OK, so you *(turn to Discloser – PINK SLIP)* will talk about a topic and you *(turn to Listener – GREEN SLIP)* will respond. How exactly that works we talk about in a minute, but is that fine with you guys?"

[If the GREEN SLIP is to your left side, ask participants to switch seats now.]

- "Before we do that, I need for you guys to switch seats because **my talker always sits to the left and my responder always sits to the right**. With over 200 dyads, I try to have some order on the video tapes."

"Okay. Just for now, we will be separating you both while you fill out some individual paperwork; this should take you no more than ten minutes. Why don't you [*turn to Discloser]* come with me."

[*So the listener stays in the room to fill out his/her paperwork. The discloser will fill out his/her paperwork in B16*]

III. Pre-Conversation Packets **(20 min)**

Actions:

- Separate participants
    - The discloser goes into B16 (the observation room).
    - The Listener stays in the interaction room, seated in his/her place.

Discloser instructions

"The first set of questions we would like you to answer are about your relationship with the (*state name*)."

Once finished with the relational measures: "Now, we would like you to take a moment to fill out this form that helps you identify the topic that you will disclose."

[Picking an event: Look at the two events listed. Select the less seriously rated event. If both events are rated the same, pick the event that is closest in nature to an academic event]

Once finished with the event page: "Let me see. OK, why don't you go ahead and talk about this event *(highlight the selected event)*. Please go ahead now and fill out the other questionnaires having this event on your mind, and these questionnaires will also get you thinking more about the selected event so that you are then ready to talk about it.

Listener instructions

"Your role in the upcoming conversation will be to listen and respond as you normally would in a conversation about emotionally distressing events with your friends. Before you do that we'd like you to complete a few scales about yourself and your communication styles and your relationship with the discloser (*state name*)."

IV. Conversation: (10 min)

Actions:

- Bring discloser and listener back together
- Collect all paperwork

For the Discloser and Listener:

"Let's go ahead and prepare for that five minute conversation. Now, *(Discloser name),* why don't you get ready to talk about the event that you and I identified. Talk about what happened and what made this particular event so distressing, how the event made you feel, and why it's still painful/distressing now. Take your time and make sure to provide your conversational partner, *(Listener name)* here, with as much information as is necessary and as you feel comfortable disclosing, all right?

And you, *(Listener name),* you want to go ahead and respond as you normally would respond in a conversation about emotionally distressing events with your friends. So this is just a regular conversation meaning that, *(Listener name),* you talk too; it is just that we focus on *(discloser's name)* topic. Any questions?

I'm going to leave and get some equipment set up. Feel free to chat for a minute or two, just don't talk about the distressing event quite yet. You can begin that conversation as soon as I knock on wall. I will also knock on the wall when the five minutes are over so you know when I will be coming back in the room.

[Leave the room and indicate the beginning of the conversation after 1 minute.

After five minutes, knock on the door then enter to indicate the end of the conversation.]

Actions:

- While 1st RA is giving instructions, 2nd RA should stay in observation room and ensure equipment is RECORDING during small talk – the file name should be the dyad number (e.g., 001, 002)
- Knock on wall after exactly 1 minute so the conversation can begin

While the conversation is going, prep all post-conversation materials

- Make sure participant numbers are on all packet pages

V. Post-Conversation(up to 20 min)

[After 5 minutes, knock on interaction room. Pause 3 seconds and enter.]

To Participants:
"We are now almost done with this study, thank you again for participating. [*Turn to Discloser*], please follow me and bring your belongings."

"[*Turn to Listener*], you'll remain here.

Actions:
- Listener stays to complete post packet
- Discloser follows researcher into B16
- One person stays with the listener, one with the discloser to assist in completing packet and answering questions

To each participant
"We are interested in learning more about your thoughts and feelings that occurred during the conversation. If you have questions while you fill out this packet, just ask."

VI. Debriefing(5 minutes)

Actions:
- Thank participants, debrief them
- Inform participants that research participation system will be updated within 72 hours
- If the friend wants research credit as well, take down their name, email address, and RPS log in information so you can add the student to the study and grant credit in 72 hours.
- Gather all post-conversation packets

Debriefing
"Thank you for your participation today. Since talking about and listening to stressful events can be a stressful experience we have taken the liberty to compile information about the Student Health Center if you need it. If you would like further information about this study, please let me know now, and I can provide your email address to the principle investigator. If not, you may go."

For friends not signed up in RPS system:
"If your friend is the one who signed up in RPS and you would like credit, I will need you to write down the following information on our sign in sheet. We will then manually add you to the study. You'll see a few emails – one showing you were added, another showing that you were granted credit. You'll see those in the next few days."

Script for Study 2 Comparison Data (Strangers)

I. All participants, upon individual arrival:

We will be using B17 (the room closest to the stairs; the interaction room) as the meeting room. The door to B16 (the observation room) should be closed and participants should be seated at a chair located at the round table in the far corner.

Actions:

- Prep all material prior to any participant arriving
    - Have one consent form on a clipboard at each chair
    - Have a Listener pre-conversation packet on the table in the interaction room
    - Have a "Part 1" form on the table in the observation room
    - Make sure all material has the correct participant number on each page!!!
- Greet each participant and make sure s/he is in the right place
- Ensure each participant has completed the online portion of the study
    - If so, tell him/her to have a seat in one of the chairs
    - If not, inform him/her that they have failed to qualify for the study, they can complete the survey & sign up for a future timeslot but will be marked "unexcused" from this timeslot.
- Have qualified participants read and sign a consent form

II. Assigning roles: (3 min)

To the Participants:

"Thank you again for your participation today. My name is [state your name]; and this is [introduce partner], why don't y'all introduce yourself to each other."

[Give them time to introduce themselves. Remember names!]

*"*Now, just to confirm: you both have completed your initial survey, right? Great. We can begin."

"To make sure that I cover everything I will read from this script now. Let me first outline the three parts of the study that were covered in your consent form:

4. In the first part of the study you will be asked to fill out a brief packet of information
5. In the second part of the study you will be asked to talk about a personal event. The conversation will be videotaped and will last five minutes.
6. In the final part of the study you will be asked to evaluate the conversation as well as your conversational partner.

Does that sound fine with you guys?"

Assigning Roles

"Before we begin, I want to randomly assign you your roles for the conversation, that is who will be the one who gets to pick the topic and talk about it and who gets to respond."

[ACTIVE LISTENING CONDITION: Approach the confederate and have him/her choose one slip from a container. The confereate will know to choose the GREEN slip which putatively randomly assigns him/her to be the LISTENER.]

[NORMAL LISTENING CONDITION: Approach the person who sits in the left chair and have him/her choose one slip from a container. GREEN = LISTENER; PINK = DISCLOSER]

[MAKE SURE to check off who is the Listener and who is the Discloser!!!!]

"Let me please see the slip. OK, so you *(turn to Discloser – PINK SLIP)* will talk about a topic and you *(turn to Listener – GREEN SLIP)* will respond. How exactly that works we talk about in a minute, but is that fine with you guys?"

[If the GREEN SLIP is to your left side, ask participants to switch seats now.]

- "Before we do that, I need for you guys to switch seats because my talker always sits to the left and my responder always sits to the right. With 180 dyads, I try to have some order on the video tapes."

"Okay. Just for now, we will be separating you both while you fill out some individual paperwork; this should take you no more than ten minutes. Why don't you [*turn to Discloser]* come with me."

III. Pre-Conversation Packets (10 min)

Actions:

- Separate participants
    - Discloser should come into B16 (the observation room).
    - The Listener stays in the interaction room, seated in his/her chair.

Discloser instructions - A
"Please take a moment to fill out this form that helps you identify the topic that you will disclose."

[While Discloser is filling out Part I, go into the interaction room and hand the Listener his/her packet. If it is an Active Listener, hand him/her the reminder sheet].

Listener instructions
"Your role in the upcoming conversation will be to listen and respond as you normally would in a conversation about emotionally distressing events with your friends. Before you do that we'd like you to complete a few scales about yourself and your communication styles."
[Go back to Discloser. When s/he finishes Part I. Once finished, preferably choose an event with numbers 4 and above but below 6 circled. If multiple events meet this criterion, choose the one that most closely resembles an academic stressor.]

Discloser instructions – B
"Let me see. OK, why don't you go ahead and talk about this event *(highlight the selected event)*. Please go ahead now and fill out the other questionnaires having this event on your mind, and these questionnaires will also get you thinking more about the selected event so that you are then ready to talk about it.

IV. Conversation: (7 min)

Actions:
- Bring participants back together
- Take all paperwork

For the Participants:
"Let's go ahead and prepare for that five minute conversation. Now, *(Discloser name),* why don't you get ready to talk about the event that you and I identified. Talk about what happened and what made this particular event so distressing, how the event made you feel, and why it's still painful/distressing now. Take your time and make sure to provide your conversational partner, *(Listener name)* here, with as much information as is necessary and as you feel comfortable disclosing, all right?

And you, *(Listener name),* you want to go ahead and respond as you normally would respond in a conversation about emotionally distressing events with your friends. So this is just a regular conversation meaning that, *(Listener name),* you talk too; it is just that we focus on *(discloser's name)* topic. Any questions?

I'm going to leave and get some equipment set up. Feel free to get to know each other first, just don't talk about the distressing event quite yet. You can begin that conversation as soon as I knock on wall. I will knock on the wall when the five minutes are over so you know when I will be coming back in the room.

[Leave the room and indicate the beginning of the conversation after 1 minute. After five minutes, knock on the door then enter to indicate the end of the conversation.]

Actions:
- Ensure equipment is RECORDING – the file name should be the dyad number (e.g., 001, 002)
- Knock on wall after exactly 1 minute

While the conversation is going, prep all post-conversation materials
- Make sure participant numbers are on all packet pages
- Place Post-Conversation – D packet on observation room computer desk

V. Post-Conversation (25 min)

[After 5 minutes, knock on interaction room. Pause 3 seconds and enter.]

To Participants:
"We are now almost done with this study, thank you both again for participating. [*Turn to Discloser*], please follow me and bring your belongings."

"[*Turn to Listener*], you'll remain here.

Actions:

- Listener stays to complete post packet and two tests (RCQ, IPT)
- Discloser follows researcher into observation room
- One person stays with listener to assist in completing packet and tests

To Discloser

"We are interested in learning more about your thoughts and feelings that occurred during your experience talking about the event. First, we would like you to fill out this packet [*post-conversation – D already on desk*].

[*While Discloser completes packet, get the video ready and the Thought Form*]

[*Once finished with packet*]: "Now, we will be playing back a recording on this computer screen [*have Discloser sit at observation computer*]. While you watch, we would like you to think about how you just evaluated the conversation, your feelings, and your conversational partner. As you watch, please pause the tape at any point where you had a specific reaction or judgment of what the listener said or did. Please note the time and your reaction on the form here [*show Discloser it has a front and back*]."

[Make sure Discloser knows how to play, pause, and resume the video. Stay in the room to help him/her.]

To Listener

"We are interested in learning more about your thoughts and feelings that occurred during your experience listening and responding to your conversational partner. First, we would like you to fill out this packet [*post-conversation – L*].

[*While Discloser completes packet, get RCQ ready*]

RCQ Instructions

"This next questionnaire [*hand Listener RCQ*] asks you to describe two people whom you know. Please read the directions on the first page and let me know if you have questions."

[*once finished with first page*]

"Okay, you can turn the page, and I'll give you five minutes."

[*Start timer. Once five minutes is over…*]

"Okay, turn the page, and you'll have five minutes to describe the other individual."

IPT Instructions

"This last task is on the computer [*have participant sit at computer*]. For this task you will be asked to watch several short video clips and answer a question about each. All the instructions will appear on the screen, and the form is here [*show form*]. If you have questions, let me know."

VI. Debriefing

Actions:

- Thank participants, debrief them
- Inform participants that research participation system will be updated as soon as their close other completes the survey.
- Gather all post-conversation packets

Debriefing

"Thank you for your participation today. Please follow up with your close other to ensure they complete that quick survey, as soon as that's done your research credit will be granted. Since talking about and listening to stressful events can be a stressful experience we have taken the liberty to compile information about the Student Health Center if you need it. If you would like further information about this study, please let me know now, and I can provide your email address to the principle investigator. If not, you may go."

APPENDIX K: STUDY 2 INSTRUMENTATION

Listener Pre-Conversation Packet

You are enrolled in this study as a student in one or more courses offered by the Department of Communication Studies at LSU. In return for your participation in this study you can earn 2 research credits.

Before you engage in your 5 minute conversation, we are asking that you fill out a number of questionnaires. The items on these scales ask about how you generally communicate with friends. In addition, you will be asked about your relationship with the friend you brought to the lab today. **All of your answers are confidential and will not be shared with your friends at any point**.

Please answer all questions honestly. Your participation is voluntary; you can stop participating at any time. You must be 18 years of age or older to complete this survey.

If you have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, you can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

The Listening Styles Profile Revised (LSP-R)

Below are several items that people use to describe themselves as a listener. We would like you to assess how each statement applies to you by marking your level of agreement/disagreement with each item. The stronger you disagree with a statement the lower the number you will circle. The stronger you agree with a statement, the higher the number you will circle.

Please do not think of any specific listening situation but of your general ways of listening to friends.

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

When listening to friends, it is important to understand their feelings.
When listening to friends, I am mainly concerned with how they are feeling.
I listen to understand the emotions and mood of my friends.
I listen primarily to build and maintain relationships.
I enjoy listening to friends because it allows me to connect with them.
When listening to friends, I focus on understanding the feelings behind words.
I wait until all the facts are presented before forming judgments and opinions.
I tend to withhold judgment about friends' ideas until I have heard everything they have to say.
When listening to friends, I attempt to withhold making an opinion until I've heard their entire message.
When listening to friends, I consider all sides of the issue before responding.
I fully listen to what a friend has to say before forming any opinions.
To be fair to friends, I fully listen to what they have to say before making judgments.
I am impatient with friends who ramble on during conversations.
I get frustrated when friends get off topic during a conversation.
When listening to friends, I become impatient when they appear to be wasting time.
I prefer friends who quickly get to the point.
I find it difficult to listen to friends who take too long to get their ideas across.
When listening to friends, I appreciate speakers who give brief, to-the-point presentations.
When listening to friends, I focus on any inconsistencies and/or errors in what's being said.
I often catch errors in the logic of my friends' speech.
I tend to naturally notice errors in what friends say.
I have a talent for catching inconsistencies in what a friend says.
When listening to friends, I notice contradictions in what they say.
Good listeners catch discrepancies in what friends say.

Notes: Items should be ordered randomly before administration.

Source: Bodie, G. D., Worthington, D. L., & Gearhart, C. G. (2011). The Revised Listening Styles Profile (LSP-R): Development and validation. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

Selected Items from the IRAT-L (mix within LSP-R)

I feel agitated or uneasy when someone tells me there is not necessarily a clear, concrete way to deal with an important problem.
While listening, I feel tense when I have to analyze feelings carefully.
It is frustrating to listen to people discuss practical problems in philosophical and abstract ways.
I experience anxiety when listening to complex ideas others tell me.

Emotional experiences

You have just been asked to listen to your partner disclose an emotionally distressful event in the next several minutes. Please indicate how you are feeling RIGHT NOW as you think about that conversation.

There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.

	Not at All	**Somewhat**	**Moderately So**	**Very Much So**
1. I feel calm.	1	2	3	4
2. I feel tense.	1	2	3	4
3. I feel upset.	1	2	3	4
4. I feel relaxed.	1	2	3	4
5. I feel content.	1	2	3	4
6. I feel worried.	1	2	3	4

The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS)

Instructions: The following questions refer to your relationship with the person you brought to the lab today. Please think about your relationship with this individual when responding to the following questions and use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

1. My relationship with _____ is close.
2. When we are apart, I miss _____ a great deal.
3. _____ and I disclose important personal things to each other.
4. _____ and I have a strong connection.
5. _____ and I want to spend time together.
6. _____ is a priority in my life.
7. _____ and I do a lot of things together.
8. When I have free time I choose to spend it alone with _____.
9. I think about _____ a lot.
10. My relationship with _____ is important in my life.
11. I consider _____ when making important decisions.

Source: Dibble, J. L., Levine, T. R., & Park, H. S. (in press). The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS): Reliability and validity evidence for a new measure of relational closeness. *Psychological Assessment*.

A Generic Measure of Relational Satisfaction

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your relationship with the person you brought to the lab today. For each question, assess your level of satisfaction from 1 (lowest level) to 7 (highest level).

Lowest level of satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Highest level of satisfaction

How well does this person meet your needs?
How many problems are there in your relationship?
How good is your relationship compared to most?
How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
How much do you love your partner?
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

Source: Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 50*, 93-98.

Approximately how long have you known the person you brought to the lab today?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- Over 10 years

Do you consider the person you brought to the lab today your friend?

- Yes
- No

Please estimate, in months, the length of time you and _____ have been "friends".

Please indicate to what extent this person is someone (1-7; not at all, very much so)
a) from whom you seek help and support
b) to whom you self-disclose private information
c) with whom you share interests.

Perceived Social Support

Please answer the following questions about your friend: 1-7; not at all, very much so

To what extent can you count on him to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?
To what extent can you turn to him for advice about problems?
To what extent can you really count on him to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?
To what extent can you count on him for help with a problem?
If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that he would be willing to do something with you?
To what extent can you count on him to help you if a family member very close to you died?
To what extent can you count on him to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?

Demographics

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

What is your age? _____

How would you describe your ethnicity (check all that apply)

- African American/Black
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Chicano/Chicana
- Hispanic
- Latino/Latina
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

What year are you in school?

- Not in school
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student
- Non-Degree Seeking
- Other (please specify)

Are you a CMST major?

- Yes
- No – but I am a minor
- No – and I am not a minor

Discloser Pre-Conversation Packet

You are enrolled in this study as a student in one or more courses offered by the Department of Communication Studies at LSU. In return for your participation in this study you can earn 2 research credits.

Before you engage in your 5 minute conversation, we are asking that you fill out a number of questionnaires. The items on these scales ask about how you generally communicate with friends. In addition, you will be asked about your relationship with the friend you brought to the lab today. **All of your answers are confidential and will not be shared with your friends at any point**.

Please answer all questions honestly. Your participation is voluntary; you can stop participating at any time. You must be 18 years of age or older to complete this survey.

If you have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, you can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS)

Instructions: The following questions refer to your relationship with the person you brought to the lab today. Please think about your relationship with this individual when responding to the following questions and use the following scale:

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Agree

1. My relationship with _____ is close.
2. When we are apart, I miss _____ a great deal.
3. _____ and I disclose important personal things to each other.
4. _____ and I have a strong connection.
5. _____ and I want to spend time together.
6. _____ is a priority in my life.
7. _____ and I do a lot of things together.
8. When I have free time I choose to spend it alone with _____.
9. I think about _____ a lot.
10. My relationship with _____ is important in my life.
11. I consider _____ when making important decisions.

Source: Dibble, J. L., Levine, T. R., & Park, H. S. (in press). The Unidimensional Relationship Closeness Scale (URCS): Reliability and validity evidence for a new measure of relational closeness. *Psychological Assessment*.

A Generic Measure of Relational Satisfaction

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your relationship with the person you brought to the lab today. For each question, assess your level of satisfaction from 1 (lowest level) to 7 (highest level).

Lowest level of satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Highest level of satisfaction

How well does this person meet your needs?
How many problems are there in your relationship?
How good is your relationship compared to most?
How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?
How much do you love your partner?
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?
In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

Source: Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 50*, 93-98.

Approximately how long have you known the person you brought to the lab today?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-10 years
- Over 10 years

Do you consider the person you brought to the lab today your friend?

- Yes
- No

Please estimate, in months, the length of time you and _____ have been "friends".

Please indicate to what extent this person is someone (1-7; not at all, very much so)
a) from whom you seek help and support
b) to whom you self-disclose private information
c) with whom you share interests.

Perceived Social Support

Please answer the following questions about your friend: 1-7; not at all, very much so

To what extent can you count on him to listen to you when you are very angry at someone else?
To what extent can you turn to him for advice about problems?
To what extent can you really count on him to distract you from your worries when you feel under stress?
To what extent can you count on him for help with a problem?
If you wanted to go out and do something this evening, how confident are you that he would be willing to do something with you?
To what extent can you count on him to help you if a family member very close to you died?
To what extent can you count on him to give you honest feedback, even if you might not want to hear it?

Demographics

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

What is your age? _____

How would you describe your ethnicity (check all that apply)

- African American/Black
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Chicano/Chicana
- Hispanic
- Latino/Latina
- Native American
- Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

What year are you in school?

- Not in school
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student
- Non-Degree Seeking
- Other (please specify)

Are you a CMST major?

- Yes
- No – but I am a minor
- No – and I am not a minor

Disclosing a personal event

Please identify two emotionally distressful events in the space provided below THAT YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE DISCLOSING TO YOUR FRIEND. Please try to think of events that you have not previously discussed with your friend and that are not issues relevant to your relationship with your friend. Use the back page if you need more space.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Please recall each of these two events now and indicate the extent to which each of these events was emotionally distressful, i.e., upsetting, disappointing, and saddening to you.

Event 1	**7** very emotionally distressing	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1** not at all emotionally distressing
Event 2	**7** very emotionally distressing	**6**	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1** not at all emotionally distressing

*******DO NOT TURN PAGE! PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND TO SEE RESEARCH ASSISTANT FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.*******

Evaluating the event

We are interested in your current opinions about the upsetting event that was just selected. Please tell us how much each of the statements below reflects what you think right now about what happened to you.

Using the scale below, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement about the event you will talk about in a minute.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	**Strongly Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Somewhat Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very Strongly Agree**

Event severity/degree of emotional upset

This event was serious.
This event was severe.
This event was upsetting.

Avoidance

I have tried not to talk about this event.
I have tried not to think about this event.
I tried to remove this event from my memory.

Intrusion

I have thought about this event when I did not mean to.
I have had waves of strong feelings about this event.
This event has popped into my mind quite a bit.
Other things keep making me thing about this event.

I expect the person I brought to the lab today to listen to me in a supportive manner.

I have talked to someone about this event

- Yes
- No

I have talked to the person I brought to the lab today about this event

- Yes
- No

Post-Conversation Measures for Listener

The following measures will be administered to the listener – the individual who originally signed up for the study – after the conversation

The following will preface the scales:

Now that you have finished the 5 minute conversation, we are interested in how you behaved and your perceptions about the conversation in general. This questionnaire that follows asks you to reflect about yourself, the distressful event you just listened to, and your conversational partner. Please take as much time as you need to complete the following parts. And remember again: Respond to each question or statement as honestly as you can.

The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS)

Version: General, Self-Report

Please read each statement and indicate how frequently you perceive it is true with regard to the conversation you just had.
1 =Never or almost never true
2 =Usually not true
3 =Sometimes but infrequently true
4 =Occasionally true
5 =Often true
6 =Usually true
7 =Always or almost always true

Sensing
I was sensitive to what my friend was not saying.
I was aware of what my friend implied but did not say.
I understood how my friend felt.
I listened for more than just the spoken words.

Processing
I assured my friend that I would remember what they said.
I summarized points of agreement and disagreement when appropriate.
I kept track of points my friend made

Responding
I assured my friend that I was listening by using verbal acknowledgements.
I assured my friend that I was receptive to his/her ideas.
I asked questions that showed my understanding of my friend's positions.
I showed my friend that I was listening by my body language (e.g., head nods).

Notes: Items should be randomized prior to administration. If used for research purposes please cite as follows:

Source: Bodie, G. D. (2011). The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS): Conceptualization and evidence of validity with the interpersonal domain. C*ommunication Quarterly, 59,* 277-295.

Evaluating the conversation

When you responds to the items below, think about the things that you said and did in the conversation, and **evaluate your behaviors**.

Each numbered item consists of *pairs* of terms, with the numbers 1-7 in between. For example:

Derogatory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complimentary

Each pair of terms describes contradictory characteristics—that is, you cannot be both derogatory and complimentary. The numbers between each pair of terms form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a number which most accurately describes your feelings about your behavior. For example, if you think you were very derogatory, you would choose 1. If you think that you were slightly complimentary, you might choose 6. If you think you were somewhat derogatory and somewhat complimentary, you would choose 4.

Read through each of the following pairs below and circle one number for each pair.

To what extent do you think that your behavior was…

1.	Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsupportive
2.	Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insensitive
3.	Encouraging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Discouraging
4.	Reassuring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Upsetting
5.	Generous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Selfish
6.	Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Misunderstanding
7.	Compassionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Heartless
8.	Useful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Useless
9.	Considerate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inconsiderate
10.	Knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ignorant
11.	Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hurtful
12.	Distressing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comforting

Comforting Responses Scale

The following set of questions invites you to think more generally about your conversation with the other person. Carefully read each of the statements and indicate your answer on the scale next to each statement.

Please use the following scale to mark your responses:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	**Strongly Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	***Neutral***	**Somewhat Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very Strongly Agree**

EI

My friend feels better after talking with me.
My friend feels more optimistic after talking with me.
I made my friend feel better about him/herself.

Source: Clark, R. A., Pierce, A. J., Finn, K., Hsu, K., Toosley, A., & Williams, L. (1998). The impact of alternative approaches to comforting, closeness of relationship, and gender on multiple measures of effectiveness. *Communication Studies, 49*, 224-239. doi: 10.1080/10510979809368533

CR

My friend understands the situation better now that we talked about it.
My friend feels he/she ought to re-evaluate the event
Talking with me about the event helped my friend get his/her mind off it
My friend doesn't really see the stressing situation in a different light (reverse coded).

1. Overall, how well you think you came across?

Not Well At All										Extremely Well
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Overall, how much do you think you helped your conversational partner?

Not At All										Very Much So
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Overall, how good of a listener do you think you were?

Not Good at All										Extremely Good
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Measure of Relational Frames

Imagine that you have been given several different kinds of materials: wax paper, sand paper, velvet, a rubber eraser, and a brick, and asked to feel the surface of each of the different materials. Your task is to judge the relevance of each word pair to making a judgment about the materials.

Rough/smooth
Loud/quiet
Hard/Soft
High-Pitched/Low-Pitched

Most people would say that the Rough/Smooth and Hard/Soft dimensions were relevant to the task and that the Loud/Quiet and High-Pitched/Low-Pitched dimensions were irrelevant; indeed you are feeling and not hearing the materials. Note that you are not evaluating how rough, smooth, etc. the surfaces are, just indicating whether the dimensions defined by the word pair is relevant to evaluating those surfaces irrespective of their roughness or hardness.

Using this analogy, we have included below a list of dimensions that may be more or less relevant for coming to conclusions about the conversation you just had. We would like you to rate the relevance of each dimension with 1 meaning completely relevant ad 5 meaning completely relevant.

Affiliation
Affection/disaffection
Liking/disliking
Attraction/aversion
Positive regard/negative regard

Dominance-Submission
Dominance/submission
Persuade/concede
Influence/comply
Controlling/yielding

Note: Items should be arranged randomly before administration.

Post-Conversation Measures for Discloser

The following measures will be administered to the discloser – the individual who disclosed the problematic event – after the conversation

The following will preface the scales:

Now that you have finished the 5 minute conversation, we are interested in how your partner behaved and your perceptions about the conversation in general. This questionnaire that follows asks you to reflect about yourself, the distressful event you just disclosed, and your conversational partner. Please take as much time as you need to complete the following parts. And remember again: Respond to each question or statement as honestly as you can. Nothing will be shared with any of your friends.

The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS)
Version: Conversational Partner Report

We would like to continue to think of your conversational partner. Please read each statement and indicate how frequently you perceive it is true about them using the scale provided.

1 = Never or Almost Never True
2 = Usually Not True
3 = Sometimes but Infrequently True
4 = Occasionally True
5 = Often True
6 = Usually True
7 = Always or Almost Always True

My friend…

1. was sensitive to what I was not saying.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. asked questions that showed an understanding of my position.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. assured me that s/he would remember what I said.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. showed me that s/he was listening by body language (e.g., head nods).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. understood how I felt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. listened for more than just the spoken words.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. summarized points of agreement and disagreement when appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. kept track of points I made.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. assured me that s/he was listening by using verbal acknowledgements.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. was aware of what I implied but did not say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. assured me that s/he was receptive to my ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Source: Bodie, G. D. (2011). The Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS): Conceptualization and evidence of validity with the interpersonal domain. C*ommunication Quarterly*, *59*, 277-295.

Comforting Responses Scale

The following set of questions invites you to think more generally about your conversation with the other person. Carefully read each of the statements and indicate your answer on the scale next to each statement.

Please use the following scale to mark your responses:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Strongly Disagree	**Strongly Disagree**	**Somewhat Disagree**	***Neutral***	**Somewhat Agree**	**Strongly Agree**	**Very Strongly Agree**

EI

I feel better after talking with my friend.
I feel more optimistic after talking with my friend.
My friend made me feel better about myself.

Source: Clark, R. A., Pierce, A. J., Finn, K., Hsu, K., Toosley, A., & Williams, L. (1998). The impact of alternative approaches to comforting, closeness of relationship, and gender on multiple measures of effectiveness. *Communication Studies, 49,* 224-239. doi: 10.1080/10510979809368533

CR

I understand the situation better now that I talked about it with my friend.
I feel that I ought to re-evaluate the event.
Talking with my friend about the event helped me get my mind off it
I don't really see the stressing situation in a different light (reverse coded).

1. Overall, how well did your friend came across?

Not Well At All										Extremely Well
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2. Overall, how much do you think your friend helped you?

Not At All										Very Much So
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Overall, how good of a listener do you think your friend was?

Not Good at All										Extremely Good
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Assessment of Comforting Quality

Now, please think about the conversation that you just had with your friend. Think about the things that your friend said and did, and **evaluate his or her behaviors**.

Each numbered item consists of *pairs* of terms, with the numbers 1-7 in between. For example:

Derogatory 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complimentary

Each pair of terms describes contradictory characteristics—that is, your friend cannot be both derogatory and complimentary. The numbers between each pair of terms form a scale between the two extremes. You are to choose a number which most accurately describes your feelings about your friend. For example, if you think your friend was very derogatory, you would choose 1. If you think that your friend was slightly complimentary, you might choose 6. If you think your friend was somewhat derogatory and somewhat complimentary, you would choose 4.

Read through each of the following pairs below and circle one number for each pair.

To what extent do you think that the behavior of your friend was…

Supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unsupportive
Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Insensitive
Encouraging	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Discouraging
Reassuring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Upsetting
Generous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Selfish
Understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Misunderstanding
Compassionate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Heartless
Useful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Useless
Considerate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Inconsiderate
Knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ignorant
Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hurtful
Distressing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Comforting

Measure of Relational Frames

Imagine that you have been given several different kinds of materials: wax paper, sand paper, velvet, a rubber eraser, and a brick, and asked to feel the surface of each of the different materials. Your task is to judge the relevance of each word pair to making a judgment about the materials.

Rough/smooth
Loud/quiet
Hard/Soft
High-Pitched/Low-Pitched

Most people would say that the Rough/Smooth and Hard/Soft dimensions were relevant to the task and that the Loud/Quiet and High-Pitched/Low-Pitched dimensions were irrelevant; indeed you are feeling and not hearing the materials. Note that you are not evaluating how rough, smooth, etc. the surfaces are, just indicating whether the dimensions defined by the word pair is relevant to evaluating those surfaces irrespective of their roughness or hardness.

Using this analogy, we have included below a list of dimensions that may be more or less relevant for coming to conclusions about the conversation you just had. We would like you to rate the relevance of each dimension with 1 meaning completely relevant ad 5 meaning completely relevant.

Affiliation
Affection/disaffection
Liking/disliking
Attraction/aversion
Positive regard/negative regard

Dominance-Submission
Dominance/submission
Persuade/concede
Influence/comply
Controlling/yielding

Note: Items should be arranged randomly before administration.

APPENDIX L: STUDY 2 CONVERSATIONAL TURN INSTRUMENTATION

Final Task Instructions: Video Playback (Listener)

For this final part of the study, we want you to watch a videotape of your conversation. While you watch, the research assistant will be alerting you to when you actively participated in the conversation verbally and stopping the tape after your contributions. For each of these spots in the conversation, we want you to answer a few questions about your response. There are no right or wrong answers, and these answers **will not be shared** with your friend. Be as honest and accurate as possible. When we stop the tape, the research assistant will ask you to answer the questions below for each time point. Please ask the research assistant to replay your verbal contributions if you need to hear it again

Listeners kept a laminated copy of these instructions out and were given the appropriate number of contribution sheets (next page) with the times labeled.

Final Task Instructions: Video Playback (Discloser)

For this final part of the study, we want you to watch a videotape of your conversation. While you watch, the research assistant will be alerting you to when your friend actively participated in the conversation verbally and stopping the tape after your friend's contributions. For each of these spots in the conversation, we want you to answer a few questions about your friend's response. There are no right or wrong answers, and these answers **will not be shared** with your friend. Be as honest and accurate as possible. When we stop the tape, the research assistant will ask you to answer the questions below for each time point. Please ask the research assistant to replay your friend's verbal contributions if you need to hear it again.

Disclosers kept a laminated copy of these instructions out and were given the appropriate number of contribution sheets (next page) with the times labeled.

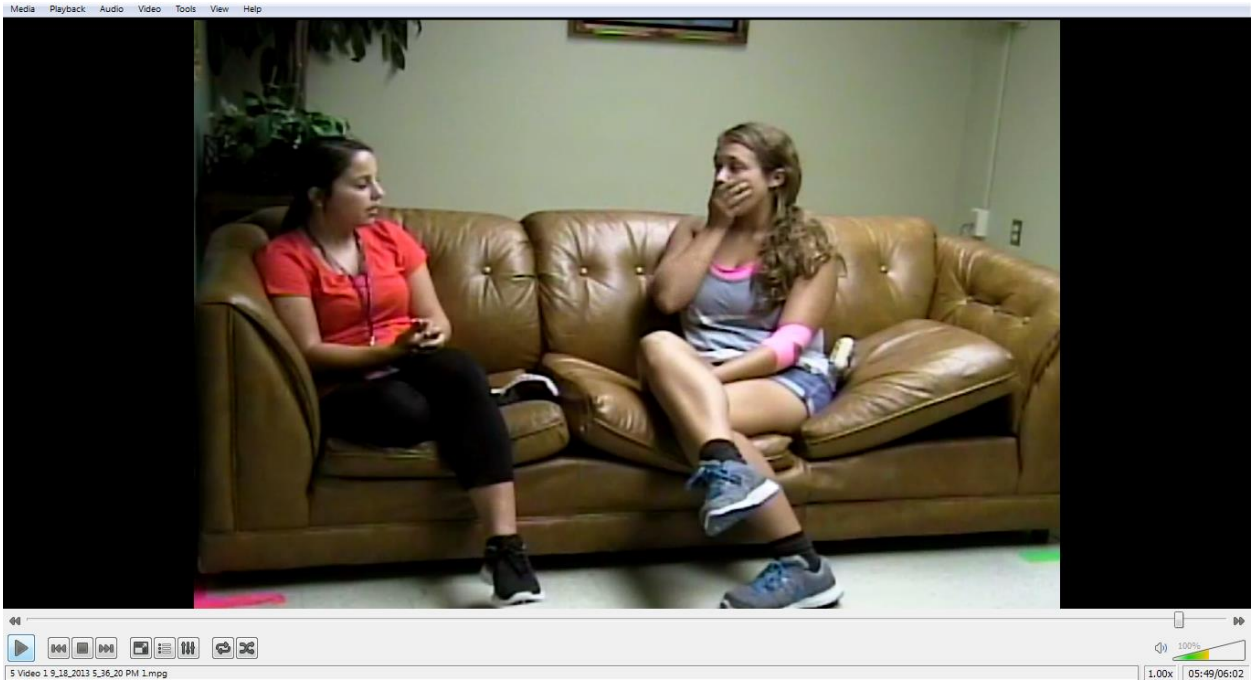
Dyad _____ ROLE: Listener Page # ____

Time & Length	Evaluations
	With this statement, what … • did you mean? • were you trying to accomplish?
	How do you think your partner feels about your response?
	How do you feel about your response?
	What I said was: hurtful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 helpful insensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sensitive unsupportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 supportive inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 appropriate *What I said:* made my partner feel worse -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 made my partner feel better
	With this response, I was: recommending how to solve the problem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so attempting reduce emotional distress not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so trying to boost my partner's self-esteem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so attempting to better understand the problem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so

Dyad _____ ROLE: Discloser Page # ____

Time & Length	Evaluations
	With this statement, what … • did your friend mean? • was your friend trying to accomplish?
	How do you feel about this response?
	How do you think your friend feels about his/her response?
	What my friend said was: hurtful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 helpful insensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 sensitive unsupportive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 supportive inappropriate 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 appropriate *What my friend said:* made me feel worse -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 made me feel better
	With this response, my friend was: recommending how to solve the problem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so attempting reduce emotional distress not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so trying to boost my self-esteem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so attempting to better understand the problem not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 very much so

APPENDIX M: STUDY 2 EXAMPLE OF EXCLUDED CUES IN TRANSCRIPTION



In this conversation, the support provider (listener) is seated on the right and the support recipient (discloser) is seated on the left. The discloser is sharing an event related to her deceased grandmother named Pearl. Her family tells her she looks and acts similar to Pearl. The discloser is upset she will never meet Pearl.

During this point in the conversation, the discloser shares that her aunt (her father's sister) was only 6 months old when Pearl died. The listener responds with a *gasp* and *covers her mouth with her hand*, visible in the screenshot. The transcript does not capture the vocalic expression (gasp) or the nonverbal response (covering her mouth with her hand), instead it reads:

Discloser: My dad's one sister was six months old whenever Pearl died

Listener: So she like never knew her

APPENDIX N: STUDY 2 CODED TRANSCRIPT EXAMPLE

Dyad 1

	ROLE	UTTERANCE	FORM	INTENT	PC
	R	1. R: Oh	K	K	0
	L	2. L: Yep!	K	K	
	R	3. R: Oh, okay	K	K	0
	L	4. L: Wait,	A	A	
	L	5. there's something we need to talk about?	Q	Q	
	R	6. (R: I think so)	D	D	0
	L	7. I'm confused.	D	D	
	R	8. R: Yeah,	K	K	0
	R	9. she said "Talk about it"	E	E	
	L	10. L: Oh okay.	K	K	
	L	11. Mhm	K	K	
	L	12. well basically the event that I wrote down was that my great aunt recently passed away actually at the beginning of this month	D	E	
	R	13. (R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	14. And it was my neena's.	D	E	
	R	15. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	16. My 'neena' is my nana but like I couldn't say nana when I was little.	D	E	
	R	17. (R: Oh!)	K	K	5
	L	18. But it was her sister, her older sister.	E	E	
	L	19. I don't know,	U	U	
	L	20. the reason, I mean,	U	U	
	L	21. uh it's not like I was like super close with her but I mean not as close as	D	E	

		with, you know, I'm my neena or like my mom or anything like that			
	R	22. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	23. but it's just tough because she had cancer and so like we kind of saw her like deteriorating.	E	E	
	R	24. (R: Oh)	K	K	5
	R	25. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	26. and then yeah, the last time I saw her she was just like extremely frail	D	E	
	L	27. and like, you know in bed and losing her hair and it was just like really rough to see.	E	E	
	R	28. (R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	29. And then uh	U	U	
Time #1 1:58-2:01	R	30. R: How long did she have it?	Q	Q	6
	L	31. (L: Uh)	K	K	
	L	32. L: Uh, let's see,	D	D	
	L	33. I know she got it when we, well she was diagnosed, uh, I wanna say maybe like back in, mhm in June?	E	E	
	L	34. Like it kind of, It happened quickly because she, she had cancer and I think it was like in her stomach and she got that removed.	E	E	
	L	35. But then it came back and then they put her on chemo and like she responded well to it,	E	E	
	R	36. (R: Oh no)	K	I	5
	L	37. but even still like, it didn't really like,	U	U	

	L	38. you know	U	U	
	R	39. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	40. It didn't work and it, uh, I think it went into remission for like a few weeks	E	E	
	L	41. and then it went and it spread to her bones	E	E	
	L	42. and then you know obviously there's not much you can do about that so	E	E	
	R	43. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	44. they knew she was gonna pass away eventually,	E	E	
	L	45. it was kind of just a matter of when it would happen.	E	E	
Time #2 2:42	R	46. (R: They just didn't know)	I	R	6
	L	47. Yeah and so I mean uh	U	U	
Time #3 2:46	R	48. R: Is that why you went back?	Q	Q	6
	L	49. L: That's not why I went back.	E	E	
	R	50. (R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	51. I mean the reason why I went back it was just uh, I, my parents, because I kept changing my major	D	E	
	R	52. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	53. and they wanted me to make the decision,	E	E	
	L	54. so take the time off to think about it so	D	E	
	R	55. (R: Yeah).	K	K	5
	L	56. But mhm,	U	U	

	L	57. I mean it was al, it was tough also just because the last time I saw her was when I was coming back here,	D	E	
	R	58. (R: Oh yeah)	K	K	5
	L	59. it was the day before I left so it's just difficult because,	E	E	
	L	60. I don't know,	U	U	
	L	61. just to see someone that you know, you obviously care about just that's the last you see them, you know?	D	D	
	R	62. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	R	63. R: Yeah.	K	K	5
Time #5 3:14	R	64. It's always hard whenever someone passes away.	E	I	5
	L	65. (L: Exactly)	K	C	
	L	66. L: Exactly,	K	C	
	L	67. and especially because I'm close with my mom's mom, my neena.	D	E	
	R	68. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	69. So it was, it's tough to see her upset and hear her upset,	E	D	
	L	70. and I'm like you know, you can't reach for your family	D	D	
Time #6 3:28	R	71. (R: It breaks your heart.)	I	I	5
	R	72. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	73. because you know you're so far away I can't	D	E	
	R	74. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	75. you know?	U	U	
	L	76. I couldn't like fly back to	D	E	

		Massachusetts like for the funeral or anything so it's tough			
	R	77. (R: Yeah.)	K	K	5
	L	78. L: But, I don't know,	U	U	
	L	79. it's difficult even like now because you still you know,	E	D	
	L	80. you wanna be there for your family	D	D	
	L	81. but you know,	U	U	
	L	82. you have to be here and finish up school and do all that stuff.	D	D	
	L	83. So it's just tough.	E	D	
	R	84. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	85. I don't know.	U	U	
	L	86. I mean	U	U	
	L	87. especially like when I last saw her and she just looked so sad and she said "You know, I know you're gonna do good in school."	E	E	
	R	88. (R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	89. I was just like "oh God"	D	D	
	L	90. I don't know,	U	U	
	L	91. I don't, I don't handle that stuff well.	D	E	
	R	92. R: I know,	K	K	5
Time #7 3:58	R	93. I don't either but that's	D	E	5
	L	94. L: Death is not a fun thing.	E	D	
	R	95. R: Oh no, not at all.	R	C	5
	L	96. L: Espe, I don't know,	U	U	
	L	97. especially because cancer, uh that's how my grandmother passed away and that's how like a few relatives	E	E	

		have passed away like so			
	R	98. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	99. it's just really tough like it just keeps happening so	E	E	
	R	100. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	101. I don't know,	U	U	
	L	102. and uh I mean,	U	U	
	L	103. also, my uh, my neena was, one of five kids.	E	E	
	L	104. She has an older brother, she, two older sisters, and she's the youngest.	E	E	
	L	105. It is, two brothers, two, oh no, three older sisters.	E	E	
	L	106. I don't know what I was thinking.	D	D	
	R	107. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	108. One passed away ages ago.	E	E	
	L	109. But uh,	U	U	
	L	110. she, there's an older sister who, you know, even older than the other two that have already passed way, and she's 96.	E	E	
	R	111. (R: Oh my God)	I	I	5
	L	112. and so I feel bad for her too because she's seen her younger sisters pass away before	D	D	
Time #8 4:47-4:58	R	113. R: Before she does.	R	R	6
	L	114. L: Exactly,	K	K	
Time #8 4:47-	R	115. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5

4:58					
	L	116.so it's just sad.	E	D	
Time #8 4:47-4:58	R	117.R: It is.	I	I	5
Time #8 4:47-4:58	R	118.I never want like,	U	U	0
Time #8 4:47-4:58	R	119.I don't know,	U	U	0
Time #8 4:47-4:58	R	120.I just feel like the older shouldn't have to see the young ones die.	D	D	5
	L	121.(L: Exactly)	C	C	
	L	122.L: Exactly	R	R	
	L	123.and especially the way I found out like I had gone out with uh some of my friends and it, it was right before school mhm,	D	E	
	L	124.well it was right when school started but it was Labor Day weekend.	E	E	
	R	125.(R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	126.So I had gone out with some of my friends	D	E	
Time #9 5:10	R	127.(R: That's pretty recent)	E	E	6
	L	128.Yeah,	K	K	
	R	129.(R: For you)	I	I	5
	L	130.it's pretty recent.	E	E	

	L	131.And so,	U	U	
	L	132.I mean	U	U	
	L	133.I actually found out when I was out, so	D	E	
	R	134.(R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	135.like my mom called me when I was out uh in Tigerland,	D	E	
	R	136.(R: Oh)	K	K	5
	L	137.and so I was like off in a corner somewhere get all upset about it,	D	E	
	R	138.(R: inaudible)	U	U	0
	L	139.and then you know,	U	U	
	L	140.I had to pull it together so	D	E	
	R	141.(R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	L	142.I don't know,	U	U	
	L	143.and also I don't like to put that burden on people,	D	D	
	L	144.so I don't like to talk about it,	D	D	
	R	145.(R: Yeah, yeah)	K	K	5
	L	146.You know I just keep it to myself, so.	D	E	
Time #10 5:36-5:45	R	147.R: I think I'm kind of like that too.	D	D	5
	L	148.L: Yeah?	Q	Q	
Time #10 5:36-5:45	R	149.R: Cause then I don't want them to feel like they need to like feel sad for me and stuff	D	D	5
	L	150.L: Exactly	K	C	
	L	151.L: You don't want to put it on them.	I	R	

	R	152.R: Yeah.	K	K	5
	R	153.Exactly.	K	K	5
	L	154.L: It's like: "Hey here's my problem"	E	D	
Time #11 5:50	R	155.R: "Listen to me, help me!"	D	D	5
	L	156.L: Right!	K	C	
	L	157.So I try not to talk about that just because it's easier just to leave it and let it be.	D	D	
	L	158.In my head.	D	D	
	R	159.R: But it's good to like talk about it or let it out	D	D	6
	L	160.L: It's true,	E	E	
	L	161.I guess that's it.	D	D	

Note: Turn labels were added in Fall 2015, as described in the methods section. Form and Intent coding were not used in the current analyses.

APPENDIX O: STUDY 2 SCAR VPC CODING REFERENCES

Copy of the SCAR manual is available upon request from Dr. Graham D. Bodie or Dr. Susanne Jones. Selected pages from the manual are provided for reference on VPC coding procedures.

Unitizing, Coding, and Rating Communicative Actions Enacted in Supportive Conversation: The Supportive Conversation Assessment Rubric (SCAR)

Providing support to someone in need is a communicative challenge accomplished in the context of conversations. Although this is recognized theoretically, the primary empirical focus of supportive communication research has been to document the impact of preformulated message characteristics using hypothetical scenarios. Very few studies have explored the impact of enacted support as it unfolds in talk. Even fewer studies have addressed the discursive complexities of a supportive episode. In their appraisal-based theory of the comforting process, Burleson and Goldsmith (1998) suggested supportive conversations as the primary site for helping a distressed person "express, elaborate, and clarify relevant thoughts and feelings" (p. 260) and ultimately making sense of his or her stress-evoking situation. The theory has remained largely untested (but see Jones & Wirtz, 2006). The main assertion of the theory is this: Supportive conversations that facilitate the reappraisal process will be more beneficial for health and well-being.

The focus of *discursively facilitating reappraisals* shifts our scholarship from examining perceived differences in isolated *messages* toward examining the complex discursive choices supporters and recipients make during talk. This shift certainly complicates things; it is much easier to evaluate the impact of single instantiations of hypothetical supportive messages than to determine the relative importance of conversational contributions made by two people. Not only is the locus of evaluation not clear (e.g., Does a respondent evaluate the entire conversation or parts of it? Are evaluations made continuously or at discrete time points?), but how to most usefully segment the individual units (e.g., messages) contained within conversation becomes a key concern. A most problematic question is the question of causality, which is an important hallmark of scientific research: Where and how is cause attributed in a conversation between two people that spans several minutes and multiple turns of talk?

The purpose of this manual is to introduce the *Supportive Conversation Assessment Rubric* (SCAR). In this manual we present

- a set of decision criteria for the unitization of supportive conversations.
- a coding and rating system for the individual units of discourse. The system has been adapted from Stiles (1992)[1], and Samter and Burleson's (1984) work on person-centered messages.

Coder Prerequisite

Coders need a solid understanding of English parts of speech and basic grammar (e.g., what is the difference between a main and subordinate clause?). The first paragraph below provides examples. Coders who need ONLY a refresher should access the web for some primers (e.g., grammar monster.com; http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/index.htm).

Outline of the SCAR Manual

1. We will begin by segmenting transcript into units, a process called **unitization**.

2. We will then categorize or **code** each of these units using a category system. Each unit will be categorized TWICE. First, it will be categorized according to its grammatical **FORM**. Second, it will be categorized according to its **INTENT** or semantic meaning.

3. Lastly, we will **rate** the units based on a criterion we call **PERSON CENTEREDNESS (PC)**.

Assessing the person-centered quality of a supportive utterance differs from assessing its form and intent (see SCAR step) in three ways:

1. **We will not *code* utterances into distinct, mutually exclusive categories that are semiotically different from one another**. Because person centeredness is a *quality* of supportive messages, the different kinds of characteristics that define this quality can be *rated* as being more or less present (or absent).

2. **We will rate listeners' utterances only, because these utterances express support and thus person centeredness**. People who participated in our studies have been assigned the role of discloser talking about a recent upsetting event or listener responding to the discloser as he or she normally would. This does not mean that people maintain listener and discloser roles throughout the conversation. In fact, the sample conversation we have been using throughout the manual illustrates how listener and discloser roles change (*see S001. unit 70*). As per our nine-level person-centered message hierarchy (Table 1), the listener in that conversation utilizes low person-centered messages because she draws attention to her own experiences.

3. **People do not respond to individual components of messages**. They respond to the *primary action* the utterance tries to accomplish. Burleson (2003) identified several primary actions that are accomplished with more and less person-centered messages. We discuss these primary actions below.

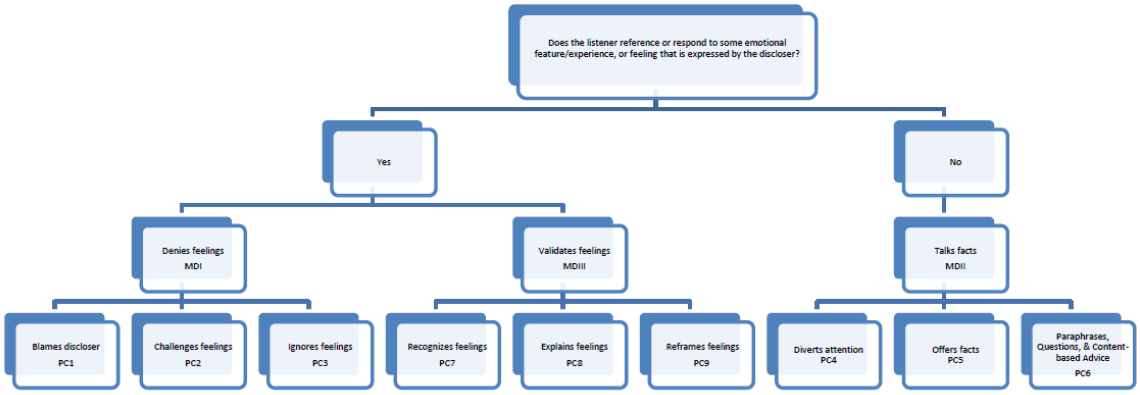


Figure: Decision tree for rating person-centered utterances in conversations.

Table 2: PC CRIB SHEET

MD I (low person-centered) PRIMARY ACTIONS: denying & challenging feelings.	**MD II** (moderate person-centered) PRIMARY ACTIONS: nonfeeling-centered (content only) reference to discloser's experiences; listener communicates understanding.	**MD III** (high person-centered) PRIMARY ACTIONS: feeling-centered recognition and elaboration of discloser's feelings.
PC1: CONDEMNING denying, blaming, critiquing GET OVER IT	PC4: DIVERTING/COMPENSATING distracting, compensation, smoothing over, silver lining, reassurances, invoking boilerplate stuff IT'll BE OK LET'S GO SHOPPING THINGS WILL BE BETTER THIS WAS MEANT TO HAPPEN	PC7: RECOGNITION clarifying emotion questions, validating emotions, offering comfort SO YOU MUST HAVE FELT REALLY SAD, RIGHT? I CAN IMAGINE HOW SAD YOU WERE
PC2: CHALLENGING feelings are unwaranted/ unreasonable; d. is responsible YOU HAVE NO REASON TO BE SAD	5: ACKNOWLEDGING AND SYMPATHYZING condolence, regret, achknowledges/affirms actions (no emotion statement though), newsmarks, invitation to talk/take time, reassurances, backchannels, shares relevant similar experiences (albeit brief) I'M SO SORRY OH NO!/SHE DID? UH HUH TAKE YOUR TIME THIS SUCKS! I'M HERE FOR YOU. THIS HAPPENED TO ME (relevant to disclosure)	PC8: ELABORATION recognizing emotion and explaining it MAYBE YOUFRUSTRATED BECAUSE HE SAID THAT TO YOU WHEN HE TALKED ABOUT LAST WEEK-END.
PC3: IGNORING evaluating/juding, directives how one needs to feel/act, talking about own experiences THINGS HAPPEN FOR A REASON I WOULD NO WORRY THIS DOES NOT SOUND SO BAD IT'S THE OTHER PERSON'S FAULTTHIS HAPPENED TO ME (irrelevant to disclosure; might lead to role change)	PC6: PARAPHRASE, QUESTION CONTENT-BASED ADVICE clarifying questions for content only, nonfeeling-centered explanation, paraphrasing what happened WHAT HAPPENED THEN? THAT TEST WAS SO HARD TO DO THOUGH. HAVE YOU TRIED GOING OUT MORE?	PC9: REFRAMING offering a different perspective and positive aspects that can be learned I KNOW THIS MADE YOU ANGRY BUT IMAGINE HOW MUCH MORE YOU NOW KNOW ABOUT X

APPENDIX P: STUDY 2 RELATIONAL MEANING CODEBOOK

Revised Content/Relational Codebook October 2015

The goal of the coding project: When people communicate with other people, their words and actions *mean something.* If we ask people what a message means, we receive a variety of responses, because every person interprets messages differently and articulates their perspective differently.

The primary goal of the current project is to understand what meanings people explicitly state about a message. These messages are verbal responses offered by one friend who is listening to a friend share an upsetting event or problem.

Meaning is something that is of interest to people. Recognizing the meaning of messages can help us have better relationships, understand directions, and fit within our social world. In pursuit of the primary goal of this coding project, we are not interested in just how *anybody* thinks of meaning; we are interested in applying *theoretical views about meaning to the messages we are evaluating.*

While we may be tempted to put our own interpretation on the messages we see and the responses we read, we cannot do that. That would be the "individual coder approach to meaning," not the "Communication theorist approach to meaning." If you read a response and think about what *you* would say, think, do, feel, write, or experience– STOP and re-read the coding manual or the resources about meaning listed at the end of this coding manual. You might want to think about being a coder as similar to being a police officer or lawyer – we need to consistently apply the laws (of the codebook) to the situation (response), with an aim of being as objective as possible. You are encouraged to read and re-read the codebook and scholarly sources used to develop this coding manual. If you feel that you are putting your own frames, experiences, perspectives, and ideas about meaning into the coding process, please take a break and come back after re-reading the codebook. Coders must leave individual perspective behind and stick to an objective evaluation of the content you are reading, comparing it to the criteria outlined here to classify the responses.

In pursuit of our primary goal, we have to start with the ways researchers classify meaning. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1969) laid out five axioms of communication in their book, *Pragmatics of Human Communication.* One of their axioms is very important for the current project - in fact, it defines what it is we will be doing in this coding project:

"Every communication has a content and a relational aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication."

We are introduced to two important components of meaning contained in every communication:

Content Meaning and Relational Meaning.

We will briefly identify relational meaning and content meaning, focusing on how these types of meaning are defined by Watzlawick et al (1967).

Content Meaning– is likened to the "report" of communication. It can be about "anything that is communicable regardless of whether the particular information is true or false, valid, invalid, or undecidable" (Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967, pp. 51-52). When we hear a response, we are hearing the *content* or report that someone is saying. "I enjoy it here at LSU," "That sucks," "I have a question," "I don't understand," and "There is a new store at the mall," are all "reports" from a communicator.

In the current project, we are asking people to tell us (in writing) their interpretation, or meaning, of a message. When we have responses that *report on what happened*, these responses emphasize content meaning. "She likes LSU," "She said it sucks," "She had a question," "She didn't understand," or "She was telling me there is a new store at the mall," are all ways people would report on the *content* of a message.

Relational Meaning – is likened to the "command" of communication. It refers to "what sort of a message it is to be taken as, and, therefore ultimately to the relationship between the communicants" (Watzlawick et al., 1967, p. 52). We are given general examples of 'This is how I see myself, this is how I see you, this is how I see you seeing me' by Watzlawick et al (1967).

When someone says, "I need you to stay late today – *that's an order*," or "I need you to stay late today – *that's a joke*!" they are explicitly stating the relational meaning. In the first example, you staying late is an order; in the second example, you staying late is a joke. When we explicitly tell others how they are to take our content (I'm joking, I'm being serious), that is an example of metacommunication, or communication about communication. Metacommunication is one way we express relational meaning. We do not always use metacommunication in our communication, but when you tell the other person how to take what you are saying, you are using metacommunication, a form of relational meaning.

In our project, when we have responses that report on the *relationship, how someone takes the message,* or *expresses the way they understood the message,* relational meaning is emphasized. In order for us to have relational meaning, respondents have to tell us how they took the message.

Perhaps "I love LSU" is a friend's response to our disclosure that we're thinking of transferring from LSU to UT Austin. We already know the command aspect ("she likes LSU"). The relational aspect could then be "She don't get why anyone would want to leave LSU" or "She is telling me that if I transfer schools, I'll never see her because she'll be here and I won't," "She is concerned that I don't like LSU like she does" or even "She's blind to the fact UT Austin has a better Communication department!" For our friend that says there's a new store at the mall, our relational meaning of that message may be "She wants us to go spend some time together shopping," or we may think, "She's such a shopaholic!!"

Typically, meaning is something we process and interpret, we don't tell people what we think they mean. We simply interpret the message, processing our meaning in our mind

and continue our conversations. In this project, we have asked people to tell us what a particular message means. By doing so, we are getting a glimpse into their mind, their interpretation of meaning, and how they articulate what a message means. Following Watzlawick et al (1967)'s axiom, we know that the original message (or communication) contains content and relational aspects. In line with this logic, the responses explaining the meaning of a communication can also contain content and relational aspects.

Watzlawick et al (1967) made some important observations about relational meaning that are going to help us with our coding project.

- *"Relationships are rarely defined deliberately or with full awareness"* (p. 52)
    - Or . . . people don't always fully define relationships when talking or saying something
- "*The more spontaneous and "healthy" a relationship, the more the relationship aspect of communication recedes into the background"* (p. 52)
- *"Conversely, "sick" relationships are characterized by a constant struggle about the nature of the relationship, with the content aspect of communication becoming less important" (*p. 52).
    - Or . . . different interpretations of meaning may focus more on content meaning at some points in time, and relational meaning at other points in time.

Watzlawick et al (1967) came from a clinical background, so their sick/healthy analogy is more helpful for them than for us. What helps us about their theoretical stance is that ***when asked to report on meaning, some people put content meaning in the foreground and relational meaning in the background, while other people put relational meaning in the foreground and content meaning in the background.***

relational

CONTENT

If we ask people about the meaning of a communication, their explanation of the meaning may foreground *and explicitly state content meaning*, with relational meaning going unstated, hiding implicitly in the background.

content

RELATIONAL

Or, if we ask people about the meaning of a communication, their explanation of the meaning may foreground and explicitly state relational meaning, *with content meaning going unstated, hiding implicitly in the background.*

For our project, we might state our own related axiom "All communication has content and relational aspects, but people vary in the explicit recognition and acknowledgement of content and relational meaning when asked to tell researchers what a communication means." This difference – a response that explicitly describes content meaning or a response that explicitly describes relational meaning – is the central component of our coding project.

When looking at meaning, we are detectives – we are determining if a response might be explicitly expressing and foregrounding relational meaning of a communication, or if that response only expresses the content meaning of a communication.

To meet our goal, we are going to code if a response foregrounds content meaning or relational meaning.
As a change from the previous version of the coding manual, we will start with some rules for determining when responses articulate, express, or explicitly acknowledge content meaning or when responses articulate, express, or explicitly acknowledge relational meaning. Before we do that, let's review the terms we are using and what equivalent terms you can use:

- **RESPONSE.** The response is the **unit of analysis** in the current coding project. It is what a person wrote down – their words either foreground or explicitly state content meaning, or foreground and explicitly state relational meaning.

- **COMMUNICATION.** You might also think about this as the **"original communication,"** "original content," "conversational turn," "conversational contribution." This is what was said in the conversation; researchers asked the people in the conversation what this communication meant. You are not coding the original communication, but you need to know the words contained in the original communication so you can answer questions about responses foregrounding content meaning or foregrounding relational meaning.

The first step we will take to understanding meaning is to classify meaning responses as either explicitly stating content meaning ["C"] or explicitly stating relational meaning ["R"]. Every response that you read and code will be given a code of either "C" or "R."

We will take meaning responses and compare the meaning responses to the original communication to determine how to code a response. We <u>always</u> start with content meaning questions, answering these questions first about our meaning responses.

A response that emphasizes and explicitly states content meaning:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication.

The question you will ask yourself as you code: **"Does this response report on what was said in the original communication?"**

Responses which foreground content meaning will have a "yes" to this question.

2. Makes only minor changes to the original communication, repeating or replicating the original communication. These minor changes include:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)
   - (We would give a "Yes" answer, stating that yes, the response does this)

The question you will ask yourself as you code: **"Does this response replicate or repeat the original communication?"**

Responses which foreground content meaning will have a "yes" to this question.

In order for a response to foreground content meaning, you must have a "yes" to both content meaning questions. If you have two "yes" answers, you do not need to do anything further; code the response as "C" as it explicitly states the content meaning of the original communication.

To help you conceptualize these rules, here are some additional guidelines to help you conceptualize what content meaning responses look like:

1. If the content of the original communication is matched side-by-side, the content of the response is similar to the content of the original communication.
    - An example from Watzlawick et al (1967) of two messages with similar content meaning are the following messages about learning to drive a manual transmission:
        - *"It is important to* ***release the clutch*** *gradually and smoothly"*
        - *"Just* ***let the clutch go****, it'll ruin the transmission in no time"*
        - These examples are great because we read them and see the word clutch in both, and the phrase "let [it] go" and "release" (synonyms), but the only differences between the two are a vague explanation of an outcome ("It is important to do this") versus a specific outcome ("[if you don't] the transmission will be ruined")
    - A change of one word (or two words) is not enough to emphasize relational meaning. If the response is still a report of what happened, what someone said, or what their words did (asked questions, inquired, told a story) it is still emphasizing content.
2. If a response reports on content explicitly stated in a prior turn, you need to compare the meaning response to the current turn and answer the two content questions to determine if the response foregrounds content meaning about the <u>original communication</u> the response was written about.
3. If a response reports on the syntactic structure of the communication ("he was asking a question"), it is still a report of the original communication, helping us to answer question 1. You should answer both content questions to determine if the response foregrounds content meaning.

If we cannot clearly answer "yes" to our two content meaning questions, we should apply our relational meaning questions to determine if a response explicitly states relational meaning.

A response that emphasizes and explicitly states relational meaning:

1. Must explicitly tell us the respondent's explicit analysis, understanding, or interpretation of what a communication meant in a response. Relational meaning shows the "command" of a message, or how the message was taken by someone.

The question you will ask yourself as you code: **Does this response explicitly state how the person writing the response took the communication (their interpretation, analysis, and understanding)?**

2. Must deviate from a simple report of the content, saying something completely different from what was contained in the communication.

The question you will ask yourself as you code: **Does this response use different words and phrases to talk about the original communication?**

In order for a response to foreground content meaning, you must have a "no" to both content meaning questions and a "yes" to both relational meaning questions. If you have two "yes" answers to the relational meaning questions, code the response as "R" as it explicitly states the relational meaning of the original communication.

In addition to these two rules of relational meaning, you can use the following additional guidelines to help you determine if a response foregrounds relational meaning.

1. If the content of the conversational turn is matched side-by-side with the meaning response, the relational meaning response shares very little in common with the original communication.
    - Because relational communication is tied to the context, it is not as easy to say a proportional or percentage rule. In fact, we may see duplicate words, but these words need to be more than discourse markers ("so" "just" "like") or common verbs like "is" or "was" or "had" and "has." We need to see responses that focus on different subjects (my thoughts versus your thoughts), verbs (what you want me to do versus what I think), ideas (the problematic event versus thoughts, feelings, and emotions). A meaning response explicating relational meaning can still share *some* similar words, but these words should be words like discourse markers, common adverbs, or common verbs – not words that make our communication responses unique. "She" or "was" or "it" or "like" can be shared between relational meaning responses and original communication.
2. If a response starts by reporting, but ends by explicitly acknowledging *something* about how a person sees themselves, their relationship, or their relationship partner, it still foregrounds relational meaning and is a relational meaning response. We have to read the entire response.

Relational meaning is of particular interest to communication scholars. Perhaps it is because of the Watzlawick analogy of healthy/sick relationships, or perhaps it is for other reasons. Our relationships are important – not only do we enjoy the company of others, but we benefit from having relationships with other people.

Here is a brief review of work on relational messages, meaning, and communication:

- Burgoon and Hale (1984) identify and define topoi (groups) of concepts relevant in relational communication, the process by which people define themselves and their relationship. These topoi include dominance/submission (control), intimacy (affection, attraction, liking, affection, intensity of involvement, interest, reciprocity, and inclusion), trust, depth/superficiality, emotional arousal (responsiveness), composure (self-control), similarity (identification), formality, task-social orientation.
- Burgoon and Hale (1987) and later Dillard et al (1997) develop and refine a relational communication scale, used to assess communication in interactions in a questionnaire format. Questionnaire items include:
    - He/she was intensely involved in our conversation (immediacy/affection)
    - He/she was interested in talking to me(immediacy/affection)
    - He/she showed enthusiasm while talking to me (immediacy/affection)
    - He/she made me feel he/she was similar to me (similarity/depth)
    - He/she acted like we were good friends (similarity/depth)
    - He/she wanted me to trust him/her (receptivity/trust)
    - He/she was open to my ideas (trust/receptivity)
    - He/she was honest in communicating (trust/receptivity)
    - He/she wanted the discussion to be informal (composure)
    - He/she felt very tense talking to me (composure
    - He/she attempted to persuade me (dominance)
    - He/she tried to control the interaction (dominance)
    - He/she considered us equals (equality)
    - He/she wanted to stick to the main purpose of the interaction (task orientation)
    - He/she was more interested in working on the task at hand than having social conversation (task orientation)
- Later, Dillard and Solomon (2005) develop *Relational Framing Theory* which focuses on affiliation/disaffiliation and dominance/submission as relevant frames for interpreting relational communication, acknowledging these frames vary in relevancy and affection.
- Edwards (1998) has theorized about how people interpret the relational intention of messages, where the outcome variable is an i*nterpretation or perception* of the relational intentions, finding differences in interpretation due to se, gender, emotions, personality, and equivocation of messages.

One of the challenges of relational meaning, especially in the current project design, is that we cannot draw from a theory of "this is relational meaning and this is not" – we are reliant on the participant explicitly stating and foregrounding relational meaning. What they explicitly state may mirror other ways relational communication has been defined, or it could be something completely unique to the context, interaction, communication, or relationship. We are not here to evaluate if something is "good" relational meaning or "bad" relational meaning, just that it foregrounds or explicitly states relational meaning.

Some important reminders before we proceed to examples:

- Remember, it is not up to you to judge the quality or desirability of relational meaning, just that a response explicitly states either relational meaning or content meaning.

- Because we know from Watzlawick et al (1967) that relational meaning often recedes or fades into the background, you will start with the questions of content meaning: "Until we see otherwise, every response emphasizes content meaning." If you cannot answer yes to both, you proceed to the relational questions to help you determine what a response emphasizes.
- You cannot code what you think someone meant or what you think happened. You have to code what the response says – the words in the response itself– if it helps, do not think of your task and role as evaluator, critic, or judge, but rather a file clerk who must decide if a response should stay in the current filing cabinet of content meaning, or if the response should go in the filing cabinet of relational meaning
- If you find you are reading too much into the delivery, nonverbal communication, or the conversation itself – stop. Take a break from coding. You may consider using transcripts instead of videos, or you may wish to fast forward through the conversation to the communications you are evaluating.
- Length does not determine if a response explicitly states content meaning or relational meaning. You need to read the words that are there, following our rules, to take in the whole response.

When determining if a response explicitly acknowledges content meaning or relational meaning, you should start by asking yourself the yes/no questions for content meaning. If you cannot definitively answer "yes", you can proceed through the relational meaning yes/no questions.

When people express content meaning, they duplicate, reiterate, replicate, or mirror the words said in conversation. But when people express relational meaning, they explicitly state more than the content of the turn.

Again, it is important not to think about the quality of the response. We are simply looking for enough evidence that a response has relational meaning, not if it is good/bad/nice/something you would think/something that is helpful. Yes, that means there may be some responses which you may not think are relational meaning, but if we remember that relationships are rarely fully articulated and content meaning can fade into the background, then it is relational meaning. In this first step, we are focused on classifying and sorting, not judging or evaluating.

Examples of Content and Relational Meaning, Explained

Original Communication:	Meaning Response:
"On the quizzes – what, like were they what kind of quizzes were they like in class or? – Were they on notes and stuff you took, or were they just on stuff in the book that you were supposed to read?"	**What type of quizzes were they?** **(LMean, Dyad #36, 2:45-2:52)**

In this conversation, one friend is telling another friend how she recently failed some quizzes. Her friend says the information on the left – "On the quizzes, what kind of quizzes were they" and provides examples of quiz formats ("on notes, stuff you took, on stuff in the book you were supposed to read").

When asked what this communication meant, one of the friends wrote, "What types of quizzes were they?"

Let's test our rules for determining content meaning first:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication

Yes. The response takes 40 words about quizzes and condenses these words down to 6 words. The duplicate words are "quizzes" and "what".

2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

Yes. The original content asks what kind of quizzes and provides examples of the kinds of quizzes, reporting that the meaning is about the type of quizzes "they" (the quizzes) were. When we use kind to specify a quality of something, kind of is another way to say type of ____.

Based on the affirmative answers to both questions, this response explicitly foregrounds content meaning and leaves relational meaning unstated in the background. We do not need to proceed on to the relational meaning questions.

Let's see some more examples.

Original Communication:	Meaning Response:
After hearing a friend talk about a lost dog, the friend asked "And this was when y'all were living y'all's house in uh Covington?"	**Where we were living** **(DMean, Dyad #48, 1:27)**
The discloser said she would be talking about the death of her grandfather, the friend asked, "Was this recently?"	Literally, how long ago did this happen (LMean, Dyad #78, 1:19-1:20)

Starting with the first example from Dyad #48,

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication
2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

The answer to both questions is "yes." Where we were living reports on the content meaning by simplifying the original question.

- "Y'all" (friend and his family) becomes "we" which is appropriate, because it is the friend telling the story that provided this meaning. He is part of the "y'all" his friend is referring to.
- "Living" – the content of the original communication specifies a type of residence (house) and a location (Covington), but the meaning response simplifies this to "Living" (because we live in houses located in certain towns).

Now, in Dyad #78:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication
2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

Our answers are "yes" and "yes" again. 'Was this recently?' is explicitly reported on in the meaning response. How long ago something happened, like the clutch example, is another way to ask how long ago something happened.
"How long ago this happened" and "Was this recently" - same "this" with "how long" similar to "recently."

Now, one more

Original Communication	Meaning Response:
"Did he have a collar?" [in regards to a missing dog]"	**If the dog had a collar (LMean, Dyad #48, 2:01:2:03)**

Our questions again are:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication
2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

Again, we have "yes" and "yes" as answers to our two questions to look for content meaning being emphasized. This example has our most clear replication – "he" means "the [male] dog" "had" and "have" are the same verbs in different tenses.

How about this response?

Original Contribution:	Meaning Response:
"She was like hanging around?" Asking if a particular friend named Maggie was around at Sam's house, in a conversation about managing difficulties with some friends who	**That she was listening**

are being mean.	**(DMean, Dyad #24, 3:41)**

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication
2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

Hmmm. . . . The original contribution is a question. We see one similar word – "She" – but is this the same she? The first communication is referencing Maggie (she) and if she was hanging around. The she in our response is the female friend who said the contribution. The other similar word is "was," but is/was is a verb we need to construct communication that makes sense to others, so we can't use that alone to determine meaning. "Hanging around" (there, nearby, still at the party, still at Sam's) is not represented at all. Instead, we see a new word – "listening." We cannot answer "yes" to either question.

So what about our relational meaning questions?

1. Must explicitly tell us the respondent's explicit analysis, understanding, or interpretation of what a communication meant in a response.
2. Must deviate from a simple report of the content, saying something completely different from what was contained in the communication.

In response to the first question, what we have is a respondent who says their interpretation ("she was listening." And, the response deviates from the simple report of the content, saying something different. So, we have "yes" to both relational meaning questions, and "no" to our content meaning questions.

We can continue to the other questions to help us – if these messages are side by side, we don't see a lot of similarity. Furthermore, we have a response that shows how the respondent sees their friend – their friend is listening.

This response emphasizes relational meaning, foregrounding and being explicit in relational meaning (listening), and being implicit in content meaning.

Original Communication	Meaning Response
"It's kind of childish in a way when you think about it, because like you said . . ." In a conversation about a friend's problems sharing a car with her twin sister.	**To assure her that I was listening and paying attention to her** **(LMean, Dyad #22, 2:02)**

If we test this for content meaning, we need "yes" answers to questions 1 and 2:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication

2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes ‘she,’ ‘the event’ or ‘that’ or ‘the situation’ replace the distressing event)

We answer "no" to both questions; we do not see any of the same words, other than "you" and "her" referencing the same person.

This helps us know it is likely relational meaning, so let's answer those questions.

1. Must explicitly tell us the respondent’s explicit analysis, understanding, or interpretation of what a communication meant in a response.

The person writing this response is analyzing the communication as a way of "relating." (Yes)

2. Must deviate from a simple report of the content, saying something completely different from what was contained in the communication.

The person says something completely different (Yes). Furthermore, we have a reflection of how one friend sees themselves in relation to another, one of the helpful guides from our secondary questions of relational meaning.

Time for a few more!

Original Communication	Meaning Response
The content of this contribution was “Oh, that’s normal” after the discloser shared she still had not gone to sleep the night before a big exam.	**She relates to me** **(DMean, Dyad #15, 2:30)**
Original Communication	**Meaning Response**
The content of this contribution was "Even though you weren't close," in response to the death of an older relative.	Trying to understand why it was so hard (LMean, Dyad #1, 3:11)

For content meaning questions 1 and 2 on the excerpt from Dyad #15, we are already at “no.” There are no similarities between the content, there are no similar words at all. So, let's look at our relational questions:

1. Must explicitly tell us the respondent’s explicit analysis, understanding, or interpretation of what their partner meant in a response.

The person writing this response is analyzing the communication as a way of "relating." (Yes)

2. Must deviate from a simple report of the content, saying something completely different from what was contained in the communication.

The person says something completely different (Yes). Furthermore, we have a reflection of how one friend sees themselves in relation to another, one of the helpful guides from our secondary questions of relational meaning.

Now what about the communication and response from Dyad #1? First, we can rule out both content questions quickly - we have a "no" to it being a reproduction reporting on the content, or having only minor changes to words. So, we move on to our relational questions:

The response explicitly tells us the respondent was "trying to understand why it was so hard." their interpretation of why the original communication was said - a "yes" to question 1 for relational meaning. Further, we see that the response deviates from a report on the content, saying something completely different (another yes).

One More:

Original Communication	Meaning Response
While discussing how the discloser shares a car with her twin sister, the listener says "Yeah, but that's understandable, I mean, I don't have, my little sister, she's 17 so." The discloser has represented what the listener meant	**She understands, but has never had to go through it** **(DMean, Dyad #22, 2:16-2:20)**

Let's work through this one, starting with content:

1. Reproduces and reports on the words said in the original communication

2. The only changes from the communication to the response are:
   - Synonyms used to rephrase the report
   - The articles used to report on the communication(Carly becomes 'she,' 'the event' or 'that' or 'the situation' replace the distressing event)

The words we see that are the same is "understand" ("understandable"). So, we have one word that is the same. We can't answer "yes" to either question – it's not a true report of the communication, so let's test the relational questions.

1. Must explicitly tell us the respondent's explicit analysis, understanding, or interpretation of what their partner meant in a response.

The person writing this response is analyzing the communication as a way for her friend to show understanding of her current plight.

2. Must deviate from a simple report of the content, saying something completely different from what was contained in the communication.

With the exception of one word, the discloser says something different. She understands because she has not had to go through it ("this is how I see my friend"). She's reflecting on her friend's experiences which differ from her own (being a twin and sharing everything versus having a sibling far apart in age).

Does that mean ALL stories are relational meaning?

Original Communication	Meaning Response(s)
"Yeah. Cause luckily for us like we've we I think we put down like one dog cause he like couldn't walk around anymore. Lost complete loss of his limbs, but I mean that wasn't. Uh like his back hind legs he couldn't walk around anymore. Like he basically like stood up and kind of dragged himself around a little bit and had no like feeling in his legs. So we had to put him down, but that was that was like expected And our other dog died expected. I mean, she was old. So yeah. That's really sad seven years old that like one day passes away	**Told personal story of his own dog dying. (DMean, Dyad #38, 3:36-4:02)** **Talked about how my two dogs died when I was younger (LMean, Dyad #38, 3:36-4:02)**

For both our DMean and LMean responses, we answer affirmatively to both content meaning questions. While these responses are shorter than the original content, there is duplication in content.
If you are wondering how these examples could have been relational meaning, what we would need to see is:

- A difference from the report
- Something that explicitly acknowledges how the response was understood or "taken"

If the discloser's response had instead said, "His family also treats their dogs like family members, so he gets why it's so hard to say goodbye to a pet" we would not have duplicate content and we would have a statement of how the discloser sees their friend (someone who understands or 'gets' it).

Again, this illustrates what we are doing in this coding project. While we may be tempted to see the empathy and purpose of a comforting story as a way to express and acknowledge a relationship ("he/she wants to show me they understand"), we have to rely on what has been stated – we can't put our own frame on the response.

Now that we have examples of how we are to ask these questions, let's introduce and review the context of this particular study.

Study Context:
So far, we know there are original communications (messages/verbal statements) and meaning responses. How do we have this information?

1.) Relevant Study Information and Procedures:
Friends (in dyads, or pairs) signed up for appointments in our CMST Interaction Laboratory to earn research credit.

Discloser - One friend was assigned to share a problem. In the videos, the discloser is seated on the (stage) left of the couch.
Listener - One friend was assigned to listen and respond to the friend sharing a problem. In the videos, the listener is seated on the (stage) right of the couch.

Original Communications - Communications, messages, and contributions - the examples you have seen earlier - these messages are all things the listener said in the conversation. To stay true to our axiom from Watzlawick et al (1967) we are calling them "communications" because they have content and relational meaning. These communications occurred in a 5-minute conversation about the discloser's problem.

Meaning Response - The friends sat in separate rooms and watched a recording of their conversation after it had occurred. Friends were asked to pay attention to what the discloser said (their communication) and write down what the listener meant.

DMean Response: The disclosers wrote their interpretation of the listener's communication, answering the question, "What did your friend mean?"

LMean Response: The listeners wrote their interpretation of their own communication, answering the question, "What did you mean?"
Each discloser and listener evaluated multiple listener communications, marked at different times throughout the conversation. The meaning responses must be compared to the communication at the particular point in the conversation, otherwise we will not be able to answer our questions well.

Remember, we are classifying these meaning responses - <u>not</u> the original communications.

We can interpret content and relational meaning in any communication, but there are some unique characteristics of the current project.

1.) It is important to consider the source of the response you are evaluating - discloser or listener. The reason this matters is for determining articles in the meaning responses.

- Dyad #48, 1:27. When this example was presented, the communication from the listener asks where "y'all were living." In the response we subjected to questions of content meaning, the response said "we were living." That response came from the discloser, who was asked the question - that is how "y'all" (you all, directed at the discloser and his family) can become "we" (discloser referencing himself and his family).

- Similarly, in these other examples, you can see the "DMean" or "LMean" code - this should help you to think about if "I" "we" "she" or "her" are appropriate substitutions comparing the response to the original communication.

2.) It is important to evaluate each response as it compares to the original communication it was written about.

- You should focus on how the meaning response compares to the original communication it was written about. Remember, participants viewed the same part of the conversation you did, and were asked to evaluate a particular communication - so it is important to focus on what the response is responding to.

- Remember to keep the response intact - do not break it into sub components. Compare the whole response to what was said in the current communication.

    - If participants reference content the listener said in another communication, you should still follow the questions that you have to determine if something is foregrounding content or foregrounding relational meaning by comparing the current full response to the current communication you are evaluating. You should still be able to answer your content questions first, and proceed to your relational questions if you have a "no" to your content questions.

        - For example, we have already seen the original communication of ***"even though you weren't close"*** from Dyad 1. We saw the Listener's meaning response, but we have yet to see the discloser's meaning response. The discloser's meaning response was, ***"She said 'even though you weren't close,' she said this because I had previously stated I wasn't very close with the relative who passed away."*** Our discloser repeated the content of the turn, and then explained why her friend said this. When we apply our content questions to this response, we still have "you" ("I"), "very close" "close" and while we don't have a subject in the original communication, we can add "even though you weren't close [to her]" to help us see that the "her" would be "the relative who passed away." This response contains a lot of

information, but all the information does is *report* on the communication, foregrounding content meaning.

3.) It is important to remember what participants are responding to - a question that begins with "what did . . . ?"

- When answering questions, some participants begin with "He meant . . ." or "She meant . . ." - words that acknowledge they are answering the question they were asked, just like if you are asked "*Where is Coates Hall*?" You may start responding with "*Coates Hall is* in the quad." You cannot at "means" and think a response contains relational meaning; you must evaluate the whole response. Seeing the word "meant" or "means" is not enough to foreground relational meaning, you must read the entire response and answer your questions for content meaning first, and relational meaning if you have "no" to the content meaning questions.

4.) It is important to take every response "as is" or at face value - adding in only a subject/verb/beginning of the question response (#3, above) to help you match components or understand the response. The interpretation in the meaning response is based on what the participant said, and some responses may not "feel" like relational meaning or "feel" like content meaning, but that is okay. What you are evaluating is if the response explicitly states content meaning or relational meaning, not what "feels right" or "sounds right."

- For example, we have a meaning response of ***"what she said"*** (Dyad 62, 5:02-5:03) to an original communication of ***"It's not like you don't have a father figure, so."*** While brief, the most we could add to make this make sense is that it is an answer to a question (#3), - so "[she meant] what she said." We still have to code this response, so is the response explicitly reporting on the content? Yes, we would say so. We do not have content duplicated, but we have a report that someone meant what they said. It remains at content meaning.

- In another example, we have a meaning response of ***"she was saying the event happened recently. She meant that she recognized why it would still affect me."*** The original communication was, ***"That was pretty soon."*** We start off seeing only two similar words - "the event" and "that," along with "recent" and "soon." But, this is one where we have to compare the whole response. If *the* respondent had stopped at "she was saying the event happened recently," we would be able to easily answer "yes" to our content questions. However, we take the full response. While we retain similar words (recently/soon; event/that, happened/was), we have an explicit statement of how the response was taken (a recognition of feelings, why an event will affect someone) that significantly departs from the content of the turn. Further, we can answer our additional relational questions as we see "this is how she sees me - someone who is affected by the death of a relative."

5.) When in doubt . . . ask! Once we establish inter-coder reliability (a measure of similarity), you are free to ask questions, discuss, compare results with the primary researcher(s). Do not

leave something blank just because you are not sure how to answer it or think it should be coded differently.

- During the intercoder reliability process, it should be treated like an open-ended "test" or a "quiz" - you can ask basic clarification questions; consult the examples in the manual, the fully coded example video, or your notes from coding meetings. If you ask questions, the researcher(s) are there to help clarify questions you have on the general content, but cannot work to influence or explain your coding. *Should you have questions during the intercoder reliability process, it is best to ask them by explaining how you have coded something to see if you are missing any steps or if the researcher(s) can provide additional information to help you, focusing on subject/verb/context of video.*

- When you have questions during the regular coding procedures, we (researchers and coders) can start together at the beginning, going through what we know and have in our response, and talking through responses in more detail.

6.) When you see information in **meaning responses** that explicitly references the study, specific features of the lab (camera, couch, computer, plants, coffee table), or features of the task (a 5 minute conversation, assignment to conversation roles), you will want to let the researchers know there is "task" information in the meaning response.

- A definition of task meaning responses: Task meaning responses acknowledge the artificiality of the context participants are under. They acknowledge the room/space (the lab's lighting, space, arrangement of furniture, cameras), and they acknowledge the conversation participants had to have (5 minutes, where one person had to talk about a distressing event, and one person had to respond, a minute of recorded small talk, surveys that were filled out).

- Task information can occur in conjunction with meaning responses that explicitly foreground content (a change from the prior coding manual)

- Task information can also occur in conjunction with meaning responses that explicitly foreground relational meaning (in line with the prior coding manual)

- As you may have read in the information on a prior page about how researchers have studied relational communication, task responses have been theorized to be part of relational meaning. We want to mark these so we can be thorough coders

Example task meaning responses:

Original Communication	Meaning Response
"When we make it to the superbowl, we'll beat y'all again. It's gonna happen. This is a long five minutes."	**That we have surpassed our five minutes of conversation** **(DMean, Dyad #80. 5:21-5:30)**
Original Communication	**Meaning Response**
"How long as it been since this started?"	This study needs to hurry (DMean, Dyad #73, 2:07-2:08)

Both our responses contain task, so we would mark "YES" or "Y" for that part of the coding process, but how else can we code these responses?

Dyad #80
". . . This is a long five minutes" compared to meaning of "That we have surpassed our five minutes of conversation."
"This [conversation/event] is a long five minutes" is similar to "surpassing our five minutes" so we see enough similarities to answer question #2 of content meaning. We also have a *report* on what happened. So, we answer "yes" to both content questions, but also can add that this response is "task" related.

Dyad #73
"How long has it been since this started?" as an original contribution, with "This study needs to hurry" as a meaning response.
Other than the word study, we have no other similarities. It explicitly acknowledges something - the study itself. In here, it is not the explicit recognition of 'This is how I see you, seeing me' or "this is how I see myself" or "this is how I see you," but a different type of seeing - "This is how I see this study we are doing." So, we answer "no" to our content questions, "Yes" to our relational meaning questions.

The Coding Sheet, Explained:
For every time we have an original communication evaluated with a meaning response, we will complete the information on a coding sheet.
On the top of your coding sheet:

- write your name
- write the conversation (dyad) number

Then, for each communication/meaning response, you will complete a line containing information about the original communication, the discloser's meaning response, and the listener's meaning response. If any of these responses are task responses - write "yes" in the task box.

- Contribution # refers to the contribution number on the spreadsheet (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.). The contribution number and the contribution time help you to match the original communication to the meaning responses.
- Contribution time refers to the time of the original contribution in the recording (2:15, 2:09-2:11, and 5:09-5:34). The contribution time, along with the contribution #, help you to match the original communication to the meaning responses.
    - Our transcripts DO NOT HAVE time markers in them. You can consult the original videos for the contribution, locate it on the transcript, and then proceed with coding.
    - The transcripts saved to your coding computer are yours to use. If you wish to add the time to help you code from transcripts - go for it! You should take whatever steps are going to help you succeed at coding.
- DMean references the discloser's meaning response. As the top of the coding sheet reminds you, this response gives an answer to the question, "What did your friend mean?" Using the questions that you have, you should write your final decision about the response in the box - R for responses which affirm the relational meaning questions (and answer "no" to content meaning questions), and C for responses which affirm the content meaning questions (and "no" to relational meaning questions).
- There is a space for a "yes" to any responses which are 'task' responses in DMean. If your response qualifies as a 'task' response, put "Y" or "Yes" in the task box.
- LMean references the listener's meaning response. As the top of the coding sheet reminds you, this response gives an answer to the question, "What did you mean?" Using the questions that you have, you should write your final decision about the response in the box - R for responses which affirm the relational meaning questions (and answer "no" to content meaning questions), and C for responses which affirm the content meaning questions (and "no" to relational meaning questions).
- There is a space for a "yes" to any responses which are 'task' responses in LMean. If your response qualifies as a 'task' response, put "Y" or "Yes" in the task box.
- If the original communication references task but the meaning response does not explicitly state task-related information, it does not count as task. Again, we are evaluating the meaning responses.

On the coding sheet you will see some adjective pairings and scaled information (1-5). You can skip these questions for now.

How you will code:

1. Pull out a blank coding sheet for each dyad you are assigned to code.
2. Pull up the video (and transcript - recommended but not required) for each dyad you are assigned to code
3. Pull up the meaning responses excel document to see how many contributions you need to code, as well as have the meaning responses in front of you
    a. The original contributions are located in the video (and transcript), they are not duplicated in the meaning responses excel spreadsheet
    b. If you are having difficulty determining *what* problem is being discussed, there is a general information spreadsheet that lists the problem the discloser said they

would talk about - they listed two problems, researchers picked one, and you can see what one they picked in the spreadsheet.

4. Let the video play, paying attention to the original communications said by the listener
    a. you can watch the entire thing through once and then code the meaning responses by referring to the transcript
    b. you can fast forward to the contribution time points, listen and then code the meaning responses
    c. you can do a combination of what works best for you, as long as you remember that you are coding meaning responses, not original communications (contributions)
5. You will code all meaning responses (DMean and LMean) for all contributions
6. You will ensure your coding sheet is complete before moving on to the next dyad, checking:
    a. You have a C or an R for every DMean or LMean
    b. You have the number and time written down for every original communication (listener's contribution to the conversation)
    c. You have a "Y" or "yes" for any task related meaning responses

References

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Dillard, J. P., Solomon, D. H., & Palmer, M. T. (1999). Structuring the concept of relational communication. *Communication Monographs, 66,* 49-65. doi: 10.1080/03637759909376462

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Watzlawick, P., Beavin Bavelas, J., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.

Example Coding: Dyad 1

In this recording, the two friends are discussing the discloser's great aunt, who passed away recently. The verbatim description of the problem is "my great aunt passed away early this month." After one minute of small talk, the friends begin their conversation.

Original Communication #1, 1:58-2:01

The first major listener contribution is from 1:58-2:01. It becomes our first original communication, as described in the coding manual.

The listener asks, ***"How long . . . did she have it?"*** This is the original communication (or contribution) we are comparing to our meaning responses.

Following the coding sheet, we first write down the contribution number (1) and the time (1:58-2:01) from the "meaning response" file.

Then, we proceed to the responses we are evaluating. DMean1: ***"she meant 'when did we (my family) find out my great aund [sic] had cancer.'"***

Assuming this is emphasizing and foregrounding content meaning, we have to ask our two questions: Is this a report on what happened? Yes. Does it retain similarity to the original communication, with only minor changes? Yes.

The same she is referenced (the Aunt), and the question of how long someone had cancer/how long a family knew the person had cancer are two ways to report on the same content.

DMean1 Code: C

Now, we proceed to LMean. LMean1: ***"I was wondering how long she had caners [sic] for"***

Assuming this is emphasizing and foregrounding content meaning, we have to ask our two questions. Is this a report on what happened? Yes. Does it retain similarity to the original communication, with only minor changes? Yes.

The listener reports that she was wondering how long the great aunt had cancer for. The she referenced is the great aunt.

LMean1 Code: C

So far, we see:

Meaning Coding Sheet Dyad #1 Coder Name or Initials *Andrea*

Reminders: Make sure you complete all contributions in the conversation. Only complete the relational ratings for Relational coding (and R+ task codings)

Cont-rib. #	Cont-rib. Time	DMean Code	Task	Relational Ratings for R 1 = not relevant 5 = completely relevant	LMean Code	Task	Relational Ratings for R 1 = not relevant 5 = completely relevant
1	1:58-2:01	**C**		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5 Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5 Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5 Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	**C**		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5 Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5 Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5 Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5

Let's continue to the next communication.

Original Communication #2, 2:42

We continue to watch the recording and let the listener contribution (original communication) at 2:42 play before hitting pause. We hear the listener say, ***"They just didn't know, yeah"*** when the discloser said "it was kind of just a matter of when."

After writing down the contribution number and time, we review the responses, starting with DMean2: ***"My friend was finishing my sentence. I said, 'it was just a matter of when'"***

Testing our content meaning questions, the first question we want to know if this is meaning statement is reporting on the communication. The meaning response reports on what was happening, foregrounding and explicitly stating content meaning. For our second question, not only do we see a report on what happened, but the response repeats the exact content. **DMean2: C.**

We move to LMean2: ***"I was agreeing with her."*** Testing if this is content meaning questions, is this a report on what was said? Yes. It reports on the purpose behind what she said, explicitly foregrounding on the content, or report, of what was said. For the second question, the word we have in common is "yeah," a way we agree. **LMean2: C.**

We mark this information on our coding sheet, on the line below contribution 1, before continuing.

2	2:42	C	Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5	C	Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5		Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
			Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5		Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5

Original Communication #3, 2:46

We briefly play the recording, because the next contribution comes up rather quickly. The listener asks, ***"Is that why you went back to . . .?"***

DMean3: ***"My friend was referring to the semester I took off from school when she said, 'is that why you went back?'"***

While this answer might be better housed under "what was your friend trying to accomplish" or some other concept other than meaning, we work with what we have. Let's apply our content questions. Does this statement report on what happened? Yes. It reports on what happened in the original communication (what was said). Does it replicate content? Yes, through direct quoting. This response foregrounds the content of the original communication. **DMean3: C.**

Now, on to LMean3: ***"was wondering if her family's death was the reason she went back home."***

Applying our content questions, does this response report on what happened in the original communication? Yes. Is the content similar? Is that way relates to "the reason") and you (she) went back to (went back to home). This response reports on two facts, the listener is reporting on why she asked it – to see if *her friend went home* because *her friend's great aunt died.* This response is explicitly about content meaning. **LMean3: C.**

We mark this information on our coding sheet before continuing.

3	2:46	C	Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5	C	Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5		Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
			Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5		Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5

Original Communication #4, 3:11

We continue to play the recording, and hear the listener say **"even though you weren't close. . ."** in response to the discloser's statement of seeing someone for the last time.

Starting with DMean4: ***"She said, 'even though you weren't close' she said this because I had previously stated I wasn't very close with the relative who passed away."***

Our discloser likes to write a lot, so we have to take in the whole response to see if the response foregrounds content meaning or foregrounds relational meaning. Does this response report on what happened? Yes. It may be longer than the original, but it reports factually on the communication. Does this response repeat the content in the original communication? Yes. This response explicitly states content meaning. **DMean4: C.**

Now, on to **LMean4:** ***"trying to understand why it was so hard"***

The literal content is **"even though you weren't close"** and the listener's meaning response is **"trying to understand why it was so hard."** Is this response reporting on the content of the original communication? No. Does it repeat what the original communication said? No. We move on to our relational meaning questions: Does the response explicitly acknowledge how the person writing the meaning response evaluates and interprets the original communication? Yes. Does the content of the response differ from the content of the original communication? Yes. This response foregrounds and explicates the relational meaning.

We have our first relational meaning response: **LMean4: R.**

Original Communication #5, 3:14

As we continue the recording, we hear the listener's contribution: **"Yeah. It's always hard when someone passes away."**

Turning to the responses:

DMean5: ***"'It's hard when somebody in your family just passes ways,' she meant that it is difficult to deal with a family death."*** Content questions first: Does this response report on what was said in the original communication? Yes. Does the meaning response duplicate what was said in the original communication? Yes. In evaluating this response, "hard" and "difficult" are synonyms. The discloser is restating meaning that focuses on the content of the contribution, foregrounding content meaning. **DMean5: C.**

LMean5: ***"I was explaining that it's always hard to cope with a death in the family."*** Applying the content questions, we start with asking if this reports on what was said in the original communication. Does it? Yes. So, our next question: Does it duplicate or replicate the content of the original communication? It's hard (hard to cope) when someone passes a way (with a death in the family). This response foregrounds and explicitly states content meaning. **LMean5: C.**

While coding sheet completion examples are not provided, you should continue to fill out the coding sheet.

Original Communication #6, 3:28

Continuing the conversation, the listener says, **"breaks your heart, yeah"** in response to the discloser saying it is upsetting not being there for your family.

DMean6: "She was just acknowledging that she understood." We start with our content questions: Does this report on what was said in the original communication? No, it doesn't. Does it replicate what was said in the original communication? No. We move on to our relational questions. Does it explicitly state how the respondent understood, interpreted, or evaluated the original communication? Yes, because the respondent writes that they understood this statement as a way to acknowledge understanding. Does it deviate from the content, listing something completely different? This response foregrounds relational meaning. **DMean6: R.**

We have to check DMean before moving on to the next contribution.

LMean6: ***"It breaks her heart."*** We start with our content questions. Does this report on what was said in the original communication? Yes. Our second question is easy – a clear "yes" because the response replicates the original communication word-for-word, adding only "It" and changing the "you" to "her," but referencing the same person (the discloser). **LMean6: C.**

Original Communication #7, 3:58

We continue to play the video, hearing the listener's contribution of **"I know I don't either, not at all"** in a discussion about handling "that stuff" related to the death of a loved one. This listener contribution becomes our original communication.

Turning to **DMean7,** we have a response of ***"she just meant she knows death is not a pleasant thing to deal with."***

DMean7 focuses on the listener's "I know" statement preceding the acknowledgement of death being difficult to deal with, reporting on the response (yes to question 1), and replicating (I don't [deal with death] either). We have "yes" answers to both content questions, so this response foregrounds content meaning, resulting in a code of "C." **DMean7: C.**

Turning to **LMean7**, we have a response of ***"I was agreeing with her that I don't deal with death well too."***

LMean7 focuses on the listener's agreement about not dealing with death well. We use our questions, beginning with if this response reports on what was said in the original communication. Yes, it is a report

on what was said. We ask our second question, determining if this response replicates the content of the original communication. We have agreement ("I don't either"), the same subject they don't agree on (dealing with death , inferred from the content). We have another "yes," so this response foregrounds content meaning. **LMean7: C. .**

Both responses are emphasizing content meaning.

Original Communication #8, 4:47-4:58

After the recording continues to play, the friends discuss the fact the great aunt's siblings are still alive. The listener says **"Before she, yeah, I never want, like, I don't want like, I feel like the older shouldn't have to see the younger ones die"** This listener contribution becomes our original communication.

When we turn to **DMean8*, "She meant that she understands its difficult for the oldest sibling to see the younger siblings pass away,"*** we see a familiar word – "understand." But is that enough for a response to foreground relational meaning? Let's test with our content meaning questions first. Does the response report on what was said? Yes. It reports on what was said. Does it replicate the content of the original communication? Yes. This response, when we read everything that has written, it has reports and replicates on the original communication, foregrounding content meaning. **DMean8: C.**

Similarly, when we look at **LMean8*, "I feel like the older should not have to see the younger sibling die,"*** this is a restatement of the content of the listener's turn. We run the response through our questions, with affirmative answers to both questions. This response reports on what was said in the original communication (yes to question 1), and replicates the original communication (yes to question 2). This response explicitly states content meaning. **LMean8: C.**

For both 7 and 8, we continue filling out the contributions on the back side of the coding sheet.

Original Communication #9, 5:10

The discloser is explaining when she found out about her great aunt's death and where she was when her mom called her to share the news. The listener responds **"That was pretty soon."** This listener contribution becomes our original communication.

DMean9*, "she was saying the event happened recently. She meant that she recognized why it would still affect me."* The coding manual emphasizes that we must evaluate the response *as a whole* to determine meaning. This response is a great example why. We start with our content meaning questions, determining that the final part of the response keeps us from clearly answering "yes" to a response. We also see that only the first sentence duplicates or replicates the content of the turn, preventing us from a clear "yes." When do we do not have clear "yes" answers, we have to continue to our relational meaning questions.

We move on to our relational meaning questions, and find that this response explicitly states how the respondent interprets the original communication (as a way to recognize why the event would affect her). We also answer "yes" to the response <u>not</u> duplicating the content because of the full response we have to evaluate. What sets this apart is that it does not only duplicate, it adds on. We have words that are not

represented or similar to the original content. This meaning response is another illustration of why we can't have a simple rule of "X" words in common? We have to take the whole meaning response so while there are some words in the beginning, if we think of the total meaning response (18 words) compared to the original communication (4 words), two of the words are the same (soon/recent, that/the event), but we have a majority of the meaning response which does not duplicate content, but says something different about the original communication. This response does not foreground content meaning, but rather relational meaning. **DMean9: R**

Now, before we continue with the last two responses**, LMean9:** ***"saying the death was recent."*** We run through our questions, and determine that this response reports on what the original communication said, and it replicates the content- so we have yes to both answers. This response is content meaning. **LMean9: C.**

Original Communication #10, 5:36-5:45

The listener shares her similarity to the discloser, talking for about 11 seconds of how she is similar in dealing with death and telling friends about problems: **"I think I'm kind of like that too, I don't want them to feel like they have to feel sad for me like…"** with the discloser offering agreement ("Exactly!"). This listener contribution becomes our next original communication.

DMean10, ***"she just meant that she can relate to how I deal with my emotions because she deals in a similar way."*** Testing our content meaning questions, we see if this response reports on what the original communication said. The discloser reports that the listener said what she did because she acts similarly. If you are not sure quite yet, let's keep going through our questions as this one is tricky. We have a "maybe" to our first question. We continue to our next content meaning question, and we ask if this response replicates or repeats the original communication.

"I think I'm kind of like that too, I don't want them to feel like they have to feel sad for me like…"

"she just meant that she can relate to how I deal with my emotions because she deals in a similar way."

Remember, we have to first recognize the "she just meant" is a way of writing a response to the question, "What did your friend mean?"We have some replication – she is similar ("I'm like that too" / "she can relate" and "she deals in a similar way") and the area in which they are similar is not telling other people their emotions ("I don't want them [friends] to feel sad for me" / "how I deal with my emotions [not telling them to people]"). So far, our comparison looks a lot like the "clutch" example so we may have a "yes," but let's continue through our meaning questions to check.

Does this response explicitly state how the meaning response writer interprets, evaluates, or understands the communication? We understand that the discloser sees her friend's original communication as a way of stating that she (the listener) deals with emotions in a similar way. If we were wondering if this was a report on content – we now have a clearer answer. It is a report on the content, we cannot answer "yes" to an interpretation. We have a "no" to our relational meaning question. Does it differ greatly in the content reported? Again, another "no." This response is one that we might be tempted at face value to put it in the relational meaning category, giving the discloser writing the statement the benefit of the doubt. We

cannot do that – we must use our questions to help us answer if a response foregrounds content meaning or relational meaning. ***When in doubt, go through both content and relational meaning questions to determine if a response foregrounds relational meaning or content meaning.*** **DMean10: C.** [22]

LMean10, "*I agreed with her in that I don't like to tell my friends these sad events.*" Applying what we have learned from her friend's similar report, we start with our content meaning questions. Does this response report on what was said in the original communication? Yes. Does this response repeat or replicate the original communication? (Agreed I don't like to tell / "I think I'm kind of like that too" my friends these sad events / "I don't want them [friends] to feel sad"). Yes. We conclude that this response foregrounds content meaning, reporting on what was said in the original communication. **LMean10: C.**

You are almost done with coding one conversation! Fill out the coding sheet, and hit play on the conversation.

Original Communication #11, 5:50

The last contribution follows the other contribution rather quickly. The discloser tends not to say, "here's my problem." Stepping outside the current conversation, the listener mimics what you could be saying when you tell people about your problems – **"Here's my problem, listen and help me, yeah"**

DMean11, "she just meant she understood what I had previously said," must be subjected to our content meaning questions first. Does this response report on what was said in the original communication? Not quite. Continuing to our next question, does it replicate the original communication, making only minor changes to the words used? No. The discloser is not writing verbatim what the listener said in the original communication. Since we have one "no" and one "not really," we move on to our relational meaning questions. Does this response explicitly say something about how the respondent took (interpreted, understood, evaluated, etc.) the original communication? Yes. The discloser took this original communication as a way to express understanding. Does this response differ from the original communication and the words in the original communication? Yes. This is another relational meaning because it deviates from the exact content meaning of the turn, it foregrounds the relational meaning in the original communication. **DMean11: R.**

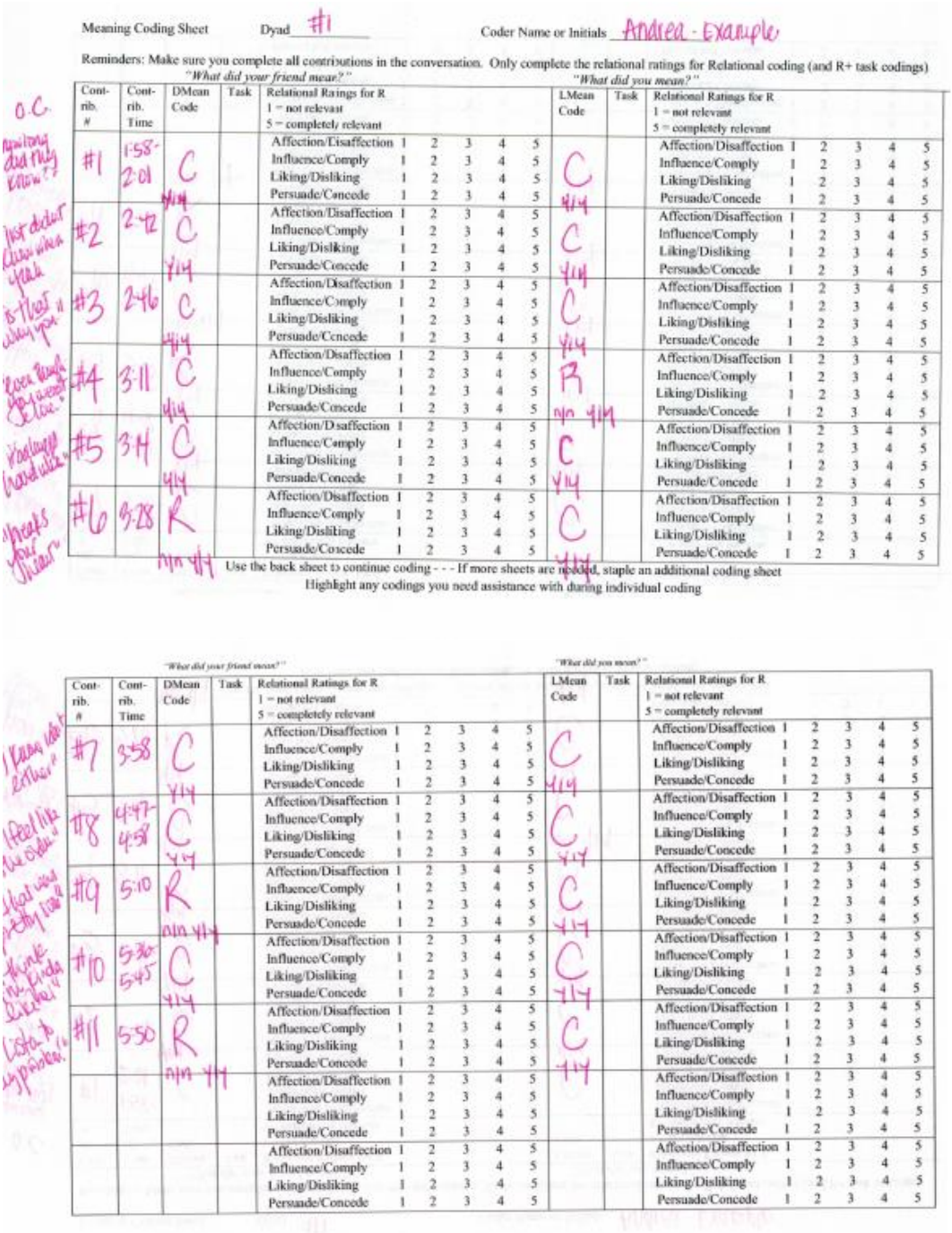
Before we are finished, we can't forget **LMean11, *"'listen to my problem', agreeing with her statement."*** Remember, we have to take in the full response when we apply our content questions. First, does it report on what was said? Yes. Does it repeat or replicate the original communication? Yes. The listener repeats the content of her turn, and says she agrees (yeah). This response foregrounds content meaning. **LMean11: C.**

Now that you have completed the coding, you should have every response coded for all 11 contributions. If you noticed, we did not have any task responses. If we do not have task responses, we cannot write "yes" in the task response box.

Example Completed Coding Sheet

[22] This is our only change from the prior coding instructions to the current coding instructions. Originally, this was coded as an "R." Now that we have clear questions to answer to help us code, we rely on those answers to help us classify what meaning is explicitly stated.

The coding sheet has extra space to help you as you code. You may find it helpful to write the original communication, write out the responses, answer questions on the sheet. As long as you record the contribution, contribution time, DMean code (C/R), LMean code (C/R), and mark if a response is 'task' related, you can write in the margins.



Meaning Coding Sheet Dyad #1 Coder Name or Initials Andrea - Example

Reminders: Make sure you complete all contributions in the conversation. Only complete the relational ratings for Relational coding (and R+ task codings)

Contrib. #	Contrib. Time	DMean Code ("What did your friend mean?")	Task	Relational Ratings for R (1 = not relevant, 5 = completely relevant)	LMean Code ("What did you mean?")	Task	Relational Ratings for R (1 = not relevant, 5 = completely relevant)
#1	1:58-2:01	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#2	2:42	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#3	2:46	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#4	3:11	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	R		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#5	3:14	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#6	3:28	R		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5

Use the back sheet to continue coding - - - If more sheets are needed, staple an additional coding sheet
Highlight any codings you need assistance with during individual coding

Contrib. #	Contrib. Time	DMean Code ("What did your friend mean?")	Task	Relational Ratings for R (1 = not relevant, 5 = completely relevant)	LMean Code ("What did you mean?")	Task	Relational Ratings for R (1 = not relevant, 5 = completely relevant)
#7	3:58	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#8	4:47-4:58	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#9	5:10	R		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#10	5:30-5:45	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
#11	5:50	R		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5	C		Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
				Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5			Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5
				Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5			Affection/Disaffection 1 2 3 4 5; Influence/Comply 1 2 3 4 5; Liking/Disliking 1 2 3 4 5; Persuade/Concede 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX Q: STUDY 2 RELATIONAL FRAMING CODEBOOK

Conversation Contribution Codebook: Relational Framing

Study Context:

Friends were brought into the lab to engage in a 5 minute supportive conversation. One friend was randomly assigned the role of problem *discloser* and shared a recent problem or stressor. The other friend was randomly assigned the role of problem *listener*, sometimes called a "respondent" in this code book because listeners do more than listen – they talk, respond, and contribute to the conversation. The respondent was instructed to "act as he/she would in a conversation like this." When the conversation happened in the lab, research assistants were watching the conversation as it unfolded. When respondents made significant contributions to the conversation – such as asking questions, offering sympathy, or sharing their own stories – the time of these contributions were written down. At the end of each conversation, research assistants were left with a list of the total number of significant contributions, as well as the times at which these contributions occurred in the conversation.

After the conversation, both friends independently watched the conversation and answered open-ended questions about the respondent's contributions to the conversation. The recording was stopped at each contribution. Disclosers provided open-ended responses to the question, "What did your friend mean?" Respondents provided open-ended responses to the question, "What did you mean?" The codebook is focused on rating these responses.

Key terms/concepts to help you with the project:

Discloser ("L"): *The friend assigned to share a problem. You will see this person's turns marked with an "L" on the transcript because the discloser was seated on the left in the video recording. You can read their contributions to the conversation, but it is not relevant to the current project.*

Respondent/ Listener ("R"): *The friend assigned to listen and respond to the problem. You will see this person's turns marked with an "R" on the transcript. Not everything said during the conversation is relevant to the current coding project – you should focus on the content highlighted within a numbered turn.*

Content – Unit of Analysis, called a "response": The response is a short phrase written by the conversational participant about a particular moment in the conversation.

- **Disclosers wrote a response to: "What did your friend mean?"**
- Listeners wrote a response to: "What did you mean?"

We are coding a subset of these responses, identified as relevant in a previous coding project. You will focus on those responses identified with an "R" as these responses have been found to emphasize the relational meaning present in the original contribution.

Understanding the Coding Project:

- Before starting, you will read some theoretical background on Relational Framing Theory and this codebook to help orient you to the current coding project.
- You will be asked to identify and discuss relevant frames for other objects/units of analysis to apply your understanding of relational framing theory.
- You will be presented with (a) a sample coding sheet, (b) a set of sample responses, and (c) a sample transcript to reference if needed. You will work through these examples during the training session, rating these responses on the scales described on pp. 4-6.
- You will be given a subset of files to code to establish intercoder reliability (consistency). You are encouraged to reference the codebook and your own notes; however, you should not discuss these files with other the other coder(s). If needed, you will be given more training and another subset of files to code.
- Once an acceptable threshold has been reached on reliability, you will be assigned a set of files to code. Again, you are encouraged to reference the codebook and your notes. When working on your assigned files, you can check with other coder(s) if you are struggling with particularly challenging responses.

Now, the codebook will guide you through a summary of relevant background information and provide a space for the example.

Defining Relational Frames

Relational Framing Theory seeks to explain how people make sense of and interpret relational messages. As part of the study protocols, the friends evaluated the entire conversation along the dimensions of relational frames. Now, you will be independently evaluating the relevance of these relational frames *for the responses written by the conversational participants.* Relational Framing Theory identifies two frames used to evaluate and interpret communication in social relationships.

The first of these frames is ***dominance-submission,*** where one partner attempts to control another partner. Control relates to status, difference, and inequality, established through indirect and direct means, as well as verbal and nonverbal behaviors. The responses you read may express the dominance-submission frame through the language and words said by the respondent.

Rachel McLaren and colleagues (2014) provide the following message as an example of relational control in the dominance/submission frame: ***"I'm your boss, so you will do what I say."*** By asserting social control and differences in power (the boss has the power to influence

the behavior of an employee), this message explicitly illustrates the dominance/submission frame.

The other frame is ***affiliation-disaffiliation,*** where one partner attempts to demonstrate appreciation, esteem, and positive regard for the other partner. The conversation contributions you read may express the affiliation-disaffiliation frame through the language and words said by the respondent.

Rachel McLaren and colleagues (2014) provide the following message as an example of liking and positive regard in the affiliation/disaffiliation frame: "I'm so glad that we're going on vacation together." This message explicitly illustrates themes like appreciation ("glad") along with liking and positive regard for the other person ("going on vacation together"), illustrating the affiliation/disaffiliation frame.

These conceptual frames represent how people think about and make sense of communication including conversations, behaviors, and messages. Each frame operates on a continuum. The heart of the *dominance-submission* frame focuses on relational control; relational control is expressed by the bipolar adjectives of dominance (person A is dominant over person B) to submission (person A yields to person B). James Dillard, Denise Solomon, and Jennifer Samp (1995) suggest *solidarity* is an appropriate term for the central concept of the frame. Solidarity is expressed in the bipolar adjectives of affiliation (Person A is connected to and likes person B) to disaffiliation (Person A is not connected and dislikes person B).

A common question that emerges at this point is why frames are represented by two adjectives, instead of just one adjective. For some readers, it may seem that dominance and submission are separate adjectives that mean completely different things. As you will see in the other examples and the coding project, the frame of relational control can be represented by numerous other adjective pairings – for example, the pairings of *influence-comply* and *persuade-concede* also represent *dominance-submission*. If you are having trouble with this concept, we will have an in-depth example on pages 7-8to help you work through some examples of frames and relevancy together.

To summarize, a relational frame has a central concept (e.g., control) and we describe this central concept using adjective pairings that capture the opposite ends of the concept (e.g., dominance-submission). Now that you have a basic understanding of what a relational frame is, we will present the rating process for evaluating relational frames.

Relational Frame Relevancy

At this point, it's important to reiterate something important to understanding relational framing theory about how frames work. Both relational frames presented here are in our mind and ready

to help us understand what other people say and do. For any given message, conversation, or communication, people determine the relevancy of the *dominance-submission* frame and the relevancy of the *affiliation-disaffiliation* frame to help interpret communication. It is this area of relational framing that is particularly intriguing to scholars –we want to understand what contextual factors (relationship, utterance form, goals) make a particular frame more salient and relevant when processing and understanding a message.

Another important point to emphasize is that you are not evaluating the frame of the original message (like McLaren et al's examples on pp. 2-3). You will be determining if the frames of *dominance-submission* and *affiliation-disaffiliation* are relevant for the object of analysis – a response where participants explaining the meaning they inferred in a particular utterance. You will determine the relevancy by rating four sets of adjective pairings – two pairings represent the dominance-submission frame (persuade/concede, influence/comply) and two pairings represent the affiliation-disaffiliation frame (affection/disaffection, liking/disliking). The adjective pairings are presented on a scale which ranges from 1 (not relevant) to 5 (completely relevant).

For each relational response, you will evaluate the relevancy of these adjectives for the response. *You must do this for every response you are assigned to code.*

When you complete the four rating scales, it is important to recognize that:

- **you are NOT evaluating your agreement with this conceptual frame for the response** (e.g., *you* think this response is affiliative or dominating). Focus on the written content to determine relevancy.
- **you are NOT evaluating if you think the person who wrote the response meant it to specifically convey this response** (e.g., the disclosing friend meant to reflect dominance, or the responding friend meant to convey affiliation). Be careful not to try and guess any hidden intentions, staying focused on the written content to determine relevancy.
- **You object of analysis is the written response, NOT the original conversation contribution recorded on the transcript**. You should focus on the response as it was written by either the respondent or the listener, consulting transcripts only as needed to understand the context of responses (e.g. what is meant by "this" or "they").

	Not Relevant				Completely Relevant
Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5

How do you decide to evaluate if an adjective pairing is relevant for a response? Since you are not guessing on intentions, you should rely on the written content of the response to determine the relevancy of the frame.

Let's describe what these scale points mean to you in determining your response rating. Starting at the lowest end of the continuum of relevancy, we have:

1 = Not relevant

What does a 1 mean? When we code, a 1 should be reserved for those responses that lack any connection the adjective pairs. You would code relational meaning responses as a 1 if the adjective pairing is not appropriate or relevant for describing the response. For instance, you would rate the adjective pairing of *liking/disliking* as a 1 when there is nothing in the response that indicates liking or disliking ("She meant what she said").

On the other end of the continuum, we have:

5 = Completely Relevant

What does a 5 mean? When we code, a 5 should be reserved for those responses that explicitly recognize, connect, and convey the idea captured in the adjective pairs. You would code relational meaning responses as a 5 if the pairing of adjectives is completely relevant for describing the response. For instance, you would rate the adjective pairing of *liking/disliking* as a 5 when the response explicitly expresses liking ("She likes me as a friend") or disliking ("She doesn't like when I act this way"). A 5 (completely relevant) should be reserved for very explicit recognition of the frames you are rating.

What about 2, 3, or 4?

Numbers 2, 3, and 4 are interpreted as gradients of relevancy. You may think of these numbers as corresponding to such labels as 2 (not too relevant), 3 (somewhat relevant), 4 (very relevant)

For example, you might encounter a response that says, "She knows ways I can solve my problem." While this response does not explicitly say *She's controlling me* or *She's influencing me*, we would read this response and sense the response should be closer to a 4 for ***persuade****/concede* as well as closer to a 4 for ***influence****/comply*. Similarly, we might see a response like "She knows I'll solve the problem on my own without her help" as relevant for the other end of the pairings, rating it closer to a 4 for *persuade/****concede*** as well as closer to a 4 for *influence/****comply*.**

In determining all ratings, you should read the content of the response as it is written, focusing on how the respondent has described what was meant by the original contribution. Responses which use language like synonyms to reflect a concept will have higher ratings of relevancy.

Should the similar adjective pairings be given the same evaluation?

If you are rating a response and determine a rating of a 2 is appropriate for liking/disliking, that does not mean you must give the rating a 2 for affection/disaffection. Similarly, if you are rating a response and determine a rating of a 4 is appropriate for persuade/concede, you do not automatically give influence/comply the same rating.

Can adjective pairings from both frames be relevant (or not relevant) for a response?

In short, yes! If a particular response has elements that suggest two different adjective pairings from both frames are relevant, you can rate it as such. If you have a response that says, "We've been friends for so long, so he can tell me what is best for me" you may feel that both ***liking****/disliking* or ***affiliation****/disaffiliation* are relevant ("friends for so long") as well as ***persuade****/concede* ("he can tell me what is best").

Identifying and Evaluating Relational Frames: Examples for Discussion and Training

We are particularly interested in the saliency of frames that capture and describe relationships between people, but frames can be developed and rated for any object of analysis. One of the best ways to illustrate the relevancy of frames is to apply it to **non**-communication examples.

Let's start with the instructions typically given to help untrained raters understand how to determine relevancy.

"Imagine that you have been given several different kinds of materials: wax paper, sand paper, velvet, a rubber eraser, and a brick, and asked to feel the surface of each of the different materials.

Your task is to judge the relevance of each word pair to making a judgement about the materials.

Rough/Smooth	1	2	3	4	5
Loud/Quiet	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
Hard/Soft	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*
High-Pitched/Low-Pitched	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*

Most people would say that the Rough/Smooth and Hard/Soft dimensions were relevant to the task and that the Loud/Quiet and High-Pitched/Low-Pitched dimensions were irrelevant.

Note that you are NOT evaluating how rough, smooth, loud, quiet, hard, soft, high-pitched, or low-pitched the surfaces are. Instead, you are indicating whether the dimension defined by the word pair is relevant to evaluating those surfaces.

Of course, your judgments might be reversed if the task were to judge sounds rather than surfaces in this example. In that case, the rough/smooth and hard/soft dimensions would be irrelevant, and you would probably rate loud/quiet and high-pitched/low-pitched sounds as relevant.

This example illustrates how the relevancy of relational frames may differ based on the object of analysis. Readers are provided with two different classes of items that can be analyzed (sounds versus physical materials) and four different adjective pairings representing the frames of volume (loud/quiet, high-pitched/low-pitched) and tactile quality (rough/smooth, hard/soft).

The examples in our codebook go one step further. Coders will get practice not only determining the relevancy of frames in evaluating objects, but will also practice developing frames and adjective pairings to better understand how and why adjective pairings are used to represent a concept.

First, coders will be presented with a list of three common household objects. For each object, coders will identify frames which describe these objects and identify adjective pairings appropriate for each frame. After identifying frames for three common household objects, coders will rate the relevancy of each frame for all three objects. During the rating process, coders will express their individual rationale and viewpoints before reaching a consensus decision of an appropriate rating for the frame and object.

Using three example objects, coders will be guided through the process of identifying frames and rating frames. Coders should work through this exercise as a group as the process, especially when rating the relevancy of frames. Each coder should be prepared to discuss their rationale and viewpoints for rating the relevancy of frames.

Extended Examples: Developing Frames & Rating Relevancy

First Example Object: **A CUP OF COFFEE** (Example A)

When you picture a cup of coffee, what comes to mind? You may be thinking: *Is the cup of coffee hot? Is it an iced coffee? How were the beans roasted? What is the color – is it black or is it light in color because of creamer or milk? How much caffeine is in that cup of coffee? Does it smell burnt? Does it taste bitter? Does it taste sweet?*

Let's focus on one description: Temperature. Temperature is a concept which can be used to describe our example object. Now, what adjectives seem appropriate for describing temperature? We could have any endpoints (0˚ C to 100 ˚ C, -30˚F to 200˚ F) but what seems most appropriate for coffee is the adjectives of hot and cold.

The coffee you are drinking may be scalding hot, or it may be ice cold. When you describe your coffee as hot (or cold), you are applying the frame of "temperature" to describe your beverage. The *hot-cold* frame represents opposite ends of the temperature continuum – hot temperature or cold temperature.

While you may have initially read about relational frames and thought of dominance and submission as opposite words which should not be combined together in a single description, this temperature example should help to illustrate how dominance and submission represent the same underlying concept of relational control. Hot and cold, like dominance and submission, are words chosen to represent the relevancy of a concept we don't directly rate.

What other concepts are used to describe a cup of coffee?

What adjective pairings could be used to represent these concepts? Another example has been provided to you, but you should come up with some more together and discuss these during the training session.

Concept (basis of frame)	Adjective pairings	Rationale (can be discussed out loud or written down – this space is for your notes)
A-1 Temperature	*Cold - Hot*	*You can order coffee as a hot beverage or a cold beverage.*
A - 2 Degree of roast	*Dark Roast – Light Roast*	*In order to have coffee, roasters have to transform beans from the raw product and the beans are roasted in various styles.*
A - 3		
A - 4		
A - 5		

Now that you have thought of some frames for describing a cup of coffee, let's think of a few more examples before we rate the relevancy of these frames.

Second Example Object: **A LAPTOP COMPUTER** (Example B)

What descriptions would you give to a laptop computer? What concepts do these represent? Why?

Concept (basis of frame)	Adjective pairings	Rationale (can be discussed out loud or written down – this space is for your notes)
B - 1 Processing speed	*Slow – Fast*	*Computers have different processing power, giving your computer the ability to complete tasks at different speeds.*
B - 2		
B - 3		
B - 4		
B - 5		

One more object: **A BOOK.** (Example C)

Concept (basis of frame)	Adjective pairings	Rationale (can be discussed out loud or written down – this space is for your notes)
C- 1 Number of Pages	*Short-Long*	*Visually, we see some books are longer than others. <u>The Great Gatsby</u> is shorter than <u>Don Quixote.</u>*
C - 2		
C - 3		
C -4		

At this point, you should have a good list of 15 (or more) adjective pairings. You developed these adjective pairings to represent frames that help us to describe the qualities of common household items including a cup of coffee, a laptop computer, and a book.

Now it is time to practice rating and evaluation. Use the first column to list your adjective pairings. Then, go through the frames one object at a time. Start with a cup of coffee, and discuss how you would rate the relevancy of hot/cold for a cup of coffee. Then, discuss how you would rate the relevancy of dark/light. Your discussion should focus on each person's rationale for their rating. Focus your discussion on explaining why the adjective pairing is relevant (or not relevant) for the object of analysis. Ratings where one person gives a 4 and the other person a 5 should still be discussed to calibrate rating systems, but coders should pay special attention to larger discrepancies (2 versus 5, 1 versus 4) to understand how coders are determining the relevancy rating. Focusing on those frames developed specifically for the items, take notes to understand what rating the coders have determined is most appropriate for that item.

Relevancy Worksheets

Frames (represented by adjective parings)	**Evaluating: A CUP OF COFFEE** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	*Your Notes*	**Evaluating: A LAPTOP COMPUTER** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**	Evaluating: A BOOK **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**
A-1 hot/cold	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
A-2 dark/light	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
A-3	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
A-4	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
A-5	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:

Discussion /Notes

Frames (represented by adjective parings)	**Evaluating: A CUP OF COFFEE** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**	**Evaluating: A LAPTOP COMPUTER** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**	**Evaluating: A BOOK** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**
B-1 Slow/fast	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
B-2	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
B-3	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
B-4	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
B-5	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:

Discussion/Notes

Frames (represented by adjective parings)	**Evaluating: A CUP OF COFFEE** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes**	**Evaluating: A LAPTOP COMPUTER** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes:**	**Evaluating: A BOOK** **1 = not relevant** **5 = completely relevant**	**Your Notes:**
C-1 short/long	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
C-2	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
C-3	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
C-4	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating:
C-5	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating	1 2 3 4 5	Final Rating

Discussion/Notes

Debriefing: Frame Development & Rating Practice Examples

These examples allow coders to think of how the coding process should work from start to finish. In this example workbook section, you have:

1. Identified frames which can be used to describe an object.
2. Rated the relevancy of these frames on the object of analysis.
3. Discussed the ratings individual coders would select, identifying and elaborating on discrepancies and similarities between coders.
4. Determined the relevancy rating which is best-suited for the object and adjective pairs developed.
5. Tested your frames by rating other objects where these frames could be more (or less) relevant. Here, individual coders have continued to discuss why certain frames are relevant (or not relevant) for these objects.

Through this process, coders should emerge with a sense of similarity of how to rate the relevancy of frames, ending up at (or very near) the same scale point.

Let's return to Relational Framing Theory, relational frames, and the relevancy of relational frames for communicative responses capturing meaning.

The process theorists went through to identify frames which can be used to describe a message is not completely dissimilar from the process you went through in the previous examples. Relational Framing Theory has emerged from years of scholarship devoted to notions of control, power, dominance, submission, affiliation, and regard present in the work of scholars from backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and communication. You used your own lay theories of what constitutes common household objects to identify and describe frames for these objects. For this coding project, you are simply applying the frames developed by scholars and evaluating the relevancy of the frame for an object (a message).

To summarize the coding process, compared with the exercise you completed:

- You will not need to develop new frames, only rate the relevancy of particular frames for an object.
- You will need to apply ratings of relevancy similarly to objects, so that similar messages receive similar ratings.
- You may find messages where both frames appear relevant, and your ratings will reflect this relevancy.

Step-by-Step Coding Instructions

Materials you will need:

A. **The physical coding sheet for a dyad (#1, #2, #3).**

B. The electronic spreadsheet file with the "R" meaning responses. Each dyad is represented on a row with the contribution #, time, and the content (DMean or LMean)

C. Optional – transcript (electronic copy).

The process, step by step:

1. **Coding sheet - Identify the contributions you need to code for the dyad #, marked with an "R" on the coding sheet.**

- **You do not code any response with a "C." Be sure to review the coding sheet to ensure you do not code the wrong responses. You will find the number of "R" responses summarized in the top right hand corner of the coding sheet.**

2. **Spreadsheet - Read the meaning response (DMean or LMean) associated with the "R" response, marked with the same time and number displayed on the coding sheet.**

- **If you are having problems understanding a meaning response, you can read the transcript, focusing on the highlighted contribution (matching time and number).**

3. **Coding sheet: Rate the relevancy of the relational frames, circling the rating.**

4. **Repeat #1-#3 for all "R" codings on the coding sheet. If the coding sheet is filled out on two (or more) sides, code all "R" responses. If there are "R" responses from both the discloser and the respondent (listener), make sure you code all "R" responses.**

5. **Ensure you have finished all four ratings for all "R" codings before moving on to another file. Enter your final numbers in the spreadsheet before starting another dyad.**

Transcript Information:

You may find that you have to reference transcripts to understand the response you are rating. When you read the full transcripts, you will want to locate the original contributions using the contribution number (1, 2, 3, . . .) and the time stamp on the original coding sheet (2:20, 3:30-3:36).

In their original explanation of relational frames, Dillard, Solomon, and Samp (1995) are careful to recognize that frames are located in our minds, not within the talk itself. The meaning responses you are reading are the way you can glimpse into the mind of the conversational partners. Do NOT to evaluate the original contribution made by the listener!

Example File – Dyad #29

To conclude the codebook and training information contained in the codebook, one file has been selected as an example for coders to discuss and work through. You will find a copy of the coding sheet, the relational meaning responses, and a copy of the transcript to reference.

Coders should discuss their evaluations of the frame relevancy and practice filling out this information on the coding sheet.

After this discussion, coders will be provided information about the intercoder reliability process, deadlines, and access to files and information.

References and Resources

Dillard, J. P., & Solomon, D. H. (2005). Measuring the relevance of relational frames: A relational framing theory perspective. In V. L. Manusov (Ed.), *The sourcebook of nonverbal measures: Going beyond words* (pp. 325-344). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Measurement and reliability analyses of the relational framing relevancy instrument.

Dillard, J. P., Solomon, D. H., & Samp, J. A. (1996). Framing social reality: The relevance of relational judgments. *Communication Research, 29*, 103-723. doi: 10.1177/009365096023006004

An explication and test of the dominance-submission and affiliation-disaffiliation frames.

Hollins, M., Faldowski, R., Rao, S., & Young, F. (1993). Perceptual dimensions of tactile surface texture: A multidimensional scaling analysis. *Perception & Psychophysics, 54*, 697-705. doi: 10.3758%2FBF03211795

Model for the tactile example provided on p. 6 and explicated in Dillard and Solomon (2005).

McLaren, R. M., Dillard, J. P., Tusing, K. J., & Solomon, D. H. (2014). Relational framing theory: Utterance form and relational context as antecedents of frame salience. *Communication Quarterly, 62*, 518-535. doi: 10.1080/01463373.2014.949387

An empirical test of relational framing theory at the utterance level of analysis.

Solomon, D. H., & McLaren, R. M. (2008). Relational framing theory: Drawing inferences about relationships from interpersonal interactions. In L. A. Baxter & D. O. Braithwaite (Eds.), *Engaging theories in interpersonal communication: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 103-132). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assigned to coders prior to the coding project as an orientation to relational framing theory.

(A) Example Coding Response Sheet:

4 D/2 L/1

Meaning Coding Sheet Dyad 29 Coder Name or Initials DKN

Reminders: Make sure you complete all contributions in the conversation. Only complete the relational ratings for Relational coding (and R+ task codings)

Contrib. #	Contrib. Time	DMean Code	Task	*"What did your friend mean?"* Relational Ratings for R 1 = not relevant 5 = completely relevant					LMean Code	Task	*"What did you mean?"* Relational Ratings for R 1 = not relevant 5 = completely relevant				
1	3:13	C		Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5	C		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
2	4:17-4:19	C		Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5	C		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
3	4:39	R		Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5	R		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
4	5:23	R		Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5	C		Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
				Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5			Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5
				Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5			Affection/Disaffection	1	2	3	4	5
				Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5			Influence/Comply	1	2	3	4	5
				Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5			Liking/Disliking	1	2	3	4	5
				Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5			Persuade/Concede	1	2	3	4	5

Use the back sheet to continue coding - - - If more sheets are needed, staple an additional coding sheet

Highlight any codings you need assistance with during individual coding

(B) Responses for Example File

From the spreadsheet you will use to code files.

Dyad	Contribution #	Contribution Time	Respondent (DMean or LMean)	Response Content	Code
29	3	4:54	DMean	He is empathizing	R
29	3	4:54	LMean	I meant that those guys in the military sucked for not being there for him	R
29	4	5:23	DMean	He recognized not having the appropriate mind set in the environment can cost my life	R

(C) Example File Transcript

	F29			
	1. L: Okay	K	K	
	2. I guess they want us to start.	D	D	
	3. So, yeah, the topic I chose to discuss was when my mother disapproved of my role in the military.	E	E	
	4. Especially when I deployed overseas.	D	E	
	5. R: Yeah	K	K	5
	6. L: So um Pretty much the reason why she was very or well, um … Uh, the reason why she was so against me being in the military is because I guess two reasons.	E	E	
	7. I should say 'was' now because like she's kind of had to learn to accept it.	D	E	
	8. One of them is religious reasons because in our my family Buddhist organization.	E	E	
	9. I'm not a very well, devout practitioner anymore.	D	E	
	10. R: yeah	K	K	5
	11. L: But, like they are very uh an… anti-violence uh more peace-oriented so for one	E	E	
	12. R: Yeah	K	K	5
	13. L: And two is because my mom's mom has a deep-rooted history in World War II.	E	E	
	14. Like, my my grandmother's youngest brother well yeah, during World War II my grandmother's youngest brother and her first husband died in World	D	E	

	War II.			
	15. R: Yeah	K	K	5
	16. L: Well, which they both got drafted to.	E	E	
	17. It wasn't by choice,	E	E	
	18. like yeah, not not all of the Japanese did actually go by choice.	E	E	
	19. R: Oh really?	Q	Q	5
	20. L: Some of them happened to be my family members, on both my dad and my mom's side	E	E	
	21. (R: mhm)	K	K	5
	22. They got drafted to it,	E	E	
	23. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	24. and they didn't come back in one piece.	E	E	
	25. R: Yeah.	K	K	5
	26. L: And I guess just My mother really never disclosed exactly how that affected her, as far as like ah	D	E	
	27. I'm sure she's seen how, my grandmother um I'm sure like how my grandmother took that	D	D	
	28. so that's I guess that's one of the biggest reasons why she was really against me being in the military and especially.	D	D	
	29. R: yeah	K	K	5
	30. Well, when I joined the military, um, yeah, she … God, she – uh, she got so mad at me.	D	E	
	31. . R: Yeah	K	K	5
	32. Like, she lives in Los Angeles, as you know.	E	E	
Time #1 3:13	33. R: Yeah.	K	D	5
	34. L: Er, yeah.	K	C	
	35. I think I told you	D	D	
Time #1 3:13	36. R: Yeah you did	R	C	5
	37. L: Um To where, like especially right before I deployed overseas, she actually came from Los Angeles to over here	D	E	

	38. You know	U	U	
	39. R: mhm	K	K	5
	40. L: and then yeah just eventually just told me okay, "Sit my, like sit your ass down. I'm talking to you."	E	E	
	41. I was like, "Oh, crap."	D	E	
	42. R: Uh-huh	K	K	5
	43. L: But, um yeah just the whole time, the military as you know is already, it's not easy business, for one.	E	E	
	44. You know	U	U	
	45. You know.	U	U	
	46. It's it's a lot of bullshit you've got to deal with	E	E	
	47. (R: Yeah)	K	K	5
	48. L: you know	U	U	
	49. So the last thing I need is just like the lack of support from my family.	D	D	
	50. And especially my mother out of all people whom I trust.	D	D	
	51. So, when I'm hearing all that … it was really kind of discouraging with the fact that I was in the military.	D	D	
	52. You know	U	U	
	53. And you know,	U	U	
	54. when I was dealing with the bullshit with the military	D	D	
	55. but not even having the family support.	D	E	
	56. And then that's how I left to Iraq, so	D	E	
	57. (R: Oh yeah)	K	K	5
	58. L: Yeah,	K	K	
	59. not to mention at the same time I actually I had just broken up with a girlfriend who had cheated on me who uh, got pregnant from another guy,	D	E	
	60. you know.	U	U	
Time #2 4:17-4:19	61. R: Oh, really?	K	Q	5
Time #2 4:17-	62. Jeez	K	I	5

4:19				
	63. L: Yeah so	K	K	
Time #2 4:17-4:19	64. R: That sucks	E	I	5
	65. L: Oh and also my grandmother had just passed away maybe like a a few months before I deployed.	D	E	
	66. So actually it's all of those events just kind of slapped me in the face right before I deployed so	E	D	
	67. R: Man	K	I	5
	68. L: yeah,	K	K	
	69. so, when my mother …was getting on to me about that, with all those other events sandwiching on me, it was uh pretty damn stressful. It was like	E	D	
	70. you know	U	U	
	71. R: Yeah	K	K	5
	72. L: yeah	K	K	
	73. at first I really didn't know how to handle that.	D	D	
	74. Because it was just like, "OK, so where do I look for support?"	E	E	
	75. Because … I talked to other guys in my unit,	D	E	
	76. I mean	U	U	
	77. and they were pretty much like, "Oh, you need to man up!" kind of deal.	E	E	
Time #3 4:54	78. R: No, no	K	C	5
Time #3 4:54	79. this sucks.	E	R	5
	80. L: "Okay, whatever that 'man-up' means … or 'Grow a pair' means."	E	E	
	81. R: Oh, uh-huh	K	K	5
	82. but uh, yeah. But eventually, I guess she noticed over time that since she had been really just scowling me about me being in the military, she, … I just eventually, it got to a point to where I had to distance myself from her because it was just way too much stress for me to handle … especially when I was in that combat zone over there in all of 2011.	D	D	
	83. L: I don't know	U	U	
Time #4	84. R: mhm	K	K	5

5:23				
Time #4 5:23	85. R: Yeah,	K	K	5
Time #4 5:23	86. that wouldn't be good.	E	I	5
	87. L: So yeah, so I was just like, okay so first and foremost, I know … regardless of what she's yelling at me about, it's I know she wants me alive	D	D	
	88. You know	U	U	
	89. and back in one piece so	E	D	
	90. R:Yeah	K	K	5
	91. L: While that's it, I was like, I had to kind of distance her,	D	D	
	92. but I know that, on the flipside hurt her a lot, so,	D	D	
	93. R: mhm	K	K	5
	94. It's kind of like a catch-22.	E	I	
	95. It's like, ok, it's like it's not a win-win situation right now	E	I	
	96. R: No	K	C	5
	97. L: Which, I could see why she's very against war.	D	D	
	98. But, … it's, wh - what can I do when I'm already in this situation, in uniform and … wearing all that gear	Q	D	
	99. I mean	U	U	
	100. You know	U	U	
	101. You know	U	U	
	102. R: yeah	K	K	5
	103. L: And it just like … some days I'm getting rocketed bombed every day. It's like	D	E	
	104. R: yeah	K	K	5

APPENDIX R: STUDY 2 SUMMARY DATA, CONTENT/RELATIONAL MEANING

Dyad #	Total # of Turns	Total # of Content Meaning Focused Responses	Total # of Relational Meaning Focused Responses
1	10	6	4
2	12	12	0
3	13	12	1
4	13	11	2
5	15	15	0
6	14	5	9
7	7	5	2
8	10	9	1
9	13	10	3
10	6	5	1
11	10	9	1
12	15	9	6
13	15	14	1
14	12	12	0
15	15	10	5
16	13	12	1
17	18	15	3
18	8	3	5
19	14	12	2
20	8	8	0
21	8	6	2
22	11	6	5
23	8	5	3
24	14	5	9
25	12	12	0
26	6	5	1
27	12	11	1
28	18	18	0
29	4	2	2
30	10	5	5
31	3	2	1
32	9	8	1
33	5	4	1
34	15	6	9

35	18	11	7
36	15	14	1
37	20	18	2
38	13	13	0
39	20	19	1
40	5	5	0
41	10	5	5
42	0	0	0
43	12	12	0
44	1	1	0
45	13	13	0
46	13	10	3
47	2	2	0
48	27	25	2
49	9	6	3
50	7	5	2
51	4	3	1
52	9	4	5
53	5	3	2
54	9	7	2
55	10	10	0
56	16	16	0
57	8	6	2
58	10	8	2
59	8	2	6
60	12	10	2
61	7	7	0
62	10	9	1
63	7	7	0
64	1	0	1
65	8	7	1
66	10	10	0
67	8	7	1
68	8	7	1
69	13	10	3
70	10	10	0
71	3	3	0
72	7	6	1
73	10	1	9
74	12	12	0
75	10	7	3

76	5	3	2
77	24	19	5
78	13	12	1
79	9	9	0
80	9	5	4
81	6	2	4
82	6	6	0
83	1	1	0
Total	849	677	172
Mean	10.23	8.16	2.07
Standard Dev.	4.99	4.9	2.34
Maximum	27	25	9

APPENDIX S: STUDY 2 ADDITIONAL OLS REGRESSION RESULTS

Turn-level variables

Before conducting OLS regression analyses of H1-H3, I conducted correlation analyses and power analyses. Table S.1 presents the correlation analyses. With $N = 172$ and a total of three predictor variables (the full model in RQ3), the power to detect significant effects is .30 for small effects ($f^2 = .02$), and is in excess of .99 for medium effects ($f^2 = .15$) and large effects ($f^2 = .35$).

Table S.1: Correlation Results, Turn-Level Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Affiliation Avg. (Turn)	--					
2. Dominance Avg. (Turn)	-.19*	--				
3. LPC Ratio x 100	-.10	.04	--			
4. MPC Ratio x 100	.06	.03	-.88***	--		
5. HPC Ratio x 100	.08	-.16	-.04	-.43***	--	
6. VPC Turn	-.01	-.07	-.78***	.59***	.26***	--

Notes. * Significant at $p < .05$. *** Significant at $p < .001$.

H1A. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of HPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 1.23, $p = .26$, $R^2 = .00$, Adjusted $R^2 = -.00$. The coefficient for HPC comfort was not significant, $b = .00$, $se = .00$, $\beta = .08$, t (170) = 1.11, $p = .27$. When more HPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level affiliation rating. H1A was not supported. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

H1B. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of HPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was significant, F (1, 170) = 4.75, p = .03, R^2 = .03, Adjusted R^2 = .02. The coefficient for HPC comfort was significant, b = -.01, se = .00, β = -.16, t (170) = -2.13, p = .03. When more HPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was a corresponding negative effect on the turn-level dominance rating. H1B was supported, mirroring the main analyses.

H2A. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.62, p = .43, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC comfort was not significant, b = .00, se = .00, β = .06, t (170) = 0.79, p = .43. When more MPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level affiliation rating. H2A was not supported. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

H2B. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.13, p = .72, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC comfort was not significant, b = .00, se = .00, β = .03, t (170) = 0.37, p = .71. When more MPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level dominance rating. H2B was not supported. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

H3A. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of LPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 1.75, p = .18, R^2 = .01, Adjusted R^2 = .00. The

coefficient for LPC comfort was not significant, b = -.00, se = .00, β = -.10, t (170) = -1.32, p = .19. When more LPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level affiliation rating. H3A was not supported. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

H3B. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of LPC comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.34, p = .56, R^2 = .02, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for LPC comfort was not significant, b = .00, se = .00, β = .04, t (170) = 0.58, p = .56. When more LPC comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level dominance rating. H3B was not supported. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

RQ3 analyses. The first estimated model featured the three predictors representing all proportions of VPC comfort and the dependent variable of turn-level affiliation ratings. The overall model was not significant, F (3, 168) = 1.05, p = .37, R^2 = .02, Adjusted R^2 = .00. No coefficients for LPC comfort, MPC comfort, or HPC comfort were significant in the combined model; when controlling for all proportions of VPC comfort, LPC comfort, MPC comfort, and HPC comfort do not impact ratings of affiliation. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text. Table S.2 presents the coefficients (standardized and unstandardized) and standard errors for the coefficients.

The second estimated model featured the three predictors representing all proportions of VPC comfort and the dependent variable of turn-level dominance ratings. The overall model was not significant, F (3, 168) = 1.68, p = .17, R^2 = .03, Adjusted R^2 = .01. No coefficients for LPC comfort, MPC comfort, or HPC comfort were significant in the combined model; when

controlling for all proportions of VPC comfort, LPC comfort, MPC comfort, and HPC comfort do not impact ratings of dominance (see Table S.3). These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

Table S.2: RQ3 Model, Affiliation Ratings

Affiliation	*b*	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
HPC Ratio x 100	0.02	0.04	0.66	.51	0.38
MPC Ratio x 100	0.02	0.04	0.52	.60	0.73
LPC Ratio x 100	0.01	0.04	0.45	.65	0.57
Constant	0.57	3.63	0.16	.88	

Table S.3: RQ3 Model, Dominance Ratings

Dominance	*b*	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
HPC Ratio x 100	-0.00	0.03	-0.06	.95	-.04
MPC Ratio x 100	0.01	0.04	0.23	.82	.31
LPC Ratio x 100	0.01	0.04	0.26	.79	.33
Constant	1.38	3.59	0.39	.70	

Secondary Analyses for H2

I also conducted secondary analyses for H2. First, Table S.4 presents the correlation results for the individual MPC predictors.

Table S.4: Correlation Results, MPC Secondary Analyses

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affiliation Avg. (Turn)	--				
2. Dominance Avg. (Turn)	-.19*	--			
3. MPC 4 Ratio x 100	-.01	.06	--		
4. MPC 5 Ratio x 100	.26***	-.04	-.12***	--	
5. MPC 6 Ratio x 100	-.19*	.03	-.25***	-.72***	--

Notes. * Significant at $p < .05$. *** Significant at $p < .001$.

MPC-4. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-4 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.03, p = .86, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC-4 comfort was not significant, b = -.00, se = .00, β = -.01, t (170) = -0.18, p = .86. When more MPC-4 comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level affiliation rating. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-4 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.56, p = .45, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC-4 comfort was not significant, b = -.00, se = .00, β = -.06, t (170) = -0.75, p = .45. When more MPC-4 comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level dominance rating. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

MPC-5. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-5 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was significant, F (1, 170) = 12.05, $p < .001$, R^2 = .06, Adjusted R^2 = .06. The coefficient for MPC-5 comfort was significant, b = .01, se = .00, β = .26, t (170) = 3.47, $p < .001$.

When more MPC-5 comfort was offered in a turn, there was a positive effect on ratings of affiliation. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-5 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.30, p = .58, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC-5 comfort was not significant, b = -.00, se = .00, β = -.06, t (170) = -0.55, p = .58. When more MPC-5 comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level dominance rating. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

MPC-6. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-6 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn affiliation frame rating. The overall model was significant, F (1, 170) = 6.29, p = .01, R^2 = .04, Adjusted R^2 = .03. The coefficient for MPC-6 comfort was significant, b = -.00, se = .00, β = .26, t (170) = -2.51, p =.013. When more MPC-6 comfort was offered in a turn, there was a negative effect on ratings of affiliation. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of the proportion of MPC-6 comfort offered in the turn and the dependent variable of turn dominance frame rating. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 170) = 0.20, p = .66, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for MPC-6 comfort was not significant, b = .00, se = .00, β = .03, t (170) = 0.44, p = .66. When more MPC-6 comfort was offered in a turn, there was no effect on the turn-level dominance rating. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text.

Combined MPC. The first estimated model featured the three predictors representing all proportions of MPC comfort and the dependent variable of turn-level affiliation ratings. The overall model was significant, F (3, 168) = 4.06, p = .01, R^2 = .07, Adjusted R^2 = .05. Only the

coefficient for MPC-5 was significant; controlling for MPC-4 and MPC-6, the proportion of MPC-5 comfort positively impacted ratings of affiliation. These results mirror the original analyses presented in the main text. Table S.5 presents the coefficients (standardized and unstandardized) and standard errors for the coefficients.

Table S.5: MPC Combined Model, Affiliation Ratings

Affiliation	*b*	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
MPC-4 Ratio x 100	.00	.00	0.13	.89	.01
MPC-5 Ratio x 100	.00	.00	2.26	.03	.23
MPC-6 Ratio x 100	-.00	.00	-0.38	.71	-.04
Constant	2.30	0.17	13.15	.001	

The second estimated model featured the three predictors representing all proportions of MPC comfort and the dependent variable of turn-level dominance ratings. The overall model was not significant, F (3, 168) = 0.32, p = .81, R^2 = .00, Adjusted R^2 = -.01. When controlling for MPC-4, MPC-5, and MPC-6, no coefficients were significant and did not impact ratings of dominance (see Table S.6).

Table S.6: MPC Combined Model, Dominance Ratings

Dominance	*b*	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
MPC-4 Ratio x 100	.00	.00	0.80	.42	.07
MPC-5 Ratio x 100	-.00	.00	-0.02	.98	-.00
MPC-6 Ratio x 100	.00	.00	0.45	.65	.05
Constant	2.13	0.18	11.84	.001	

Conversation-level variables

Before conducting OLS regression analyses of H4 and H5, I averaged affiliation ratings and dominance ratings for each conversation featuring relational meaning coded turns. There

were 59 conversations with relational meaning. I also conducted power analyses. With $N = 59$, α set at .05, and two predictor variables (Stressor Severity and Conversation Framing), the power to detect significant effects is .14 for small effects ($f^2 = .02$), .73 for medium effects ($f^2 = .15$) and .98 for large effects($f^2 = .35$). I examined the zero-order correlation coefficients for turn affiliation ratings, turn dominance ratings, conversational affiliation ratings, conversation dominance ratings, and the continuous stressor severity variable. These results are in Table S.7.

Table S.7: Correlation Results, H4-H5 information

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Affiliation Avg. (Turn)	--				
2. Dominance Avg. (Turn)	-.01	--			
3. Affiliation (Conversation)	.20	.15	--		
4. Dominance (Conversation)	.17	.12	.62***	--	
5. Stressor Severity	-.02	.18	.01	.11	--

Notes. *** Significant at $p < .001$.

H4A. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of stressor severity (0: below the median; 1: above the median) and the dependent variable of average affiliation frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 0.60, $p = .44$, $R^2 = .02$, Adjusted $R^2 = -.01$. The coefficient for stressor severity was not significant, $b = .15$, $se = .19$, $\beta = .10$, t (57) = 0.78, $p = .44$. When more severe stressors were discussed, there was no effect on the average affiliation rating at the turn level. H4A was not supported, which differed from the main analyses.

H4B. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of stressor severity (0: below the median; 1: above the median) and the dependent variable of average dominance frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 2.53, $p = .12$, $R^2 = .04$,

Adjusted R^2 = .03. The coefficient for stressor severity was not significant, b = -.31, se = .19, β = -.21, t (57) = -1.59, p = .12. When more severe stressors were discussed, there was no effect on the average dominance rating at the turn level. H4B was not supported, mirroring the results presented in the main text.

H5A. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of support recipient affiliation frame rating and the dependent variable of average affiliation frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 2.36, p = .13, R^2 = .04, Adjusted R^2 = .02. The coefficient for stressor severity was not significant, b = .20, se = .13, β = .20, t (57) = 1.54, p = .13. When more severe stressors were discussed, there was no effect on the average affiliation rating at the turn level. H5A was not supported, mirroring the results presented in the main text.

H5B. I estimated a model featuring the predictor variable of support recipient dominance frame rating and the dependent variable of average dominance frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (1, 57) = 0.77, p = .38, R^2 = .01, Adjusted R^2 = -.00. The coefficient for stressor severity was not significant, b = .09, se = .11, β = .11, t (57) = 0.88, p = .38. When more severe stressors were discussed, there was no effect on the average affiliation rating at the turn level. H5B was not supported, mirroring the results presented in the main text.

RQ4. The final RQ could not be fully replicated because of designs. I estimated two models with the conversation-level predictors and turn-level dependent variables. No VPC ratios were included in the analyses.

A model was estimated with both predictor variables predicting the average affiliation frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (2, 56) = 1.49, p = .24, R^2 = .05, Adjusted R^2 = .02. Controlling for the stressor severity and affiliative conversational

framing ratings, no individual coefficients were significant predictors for ratings of affiliation (see Table S.8).

A combined model was estimated with both predictor variables predicting the average dominance frame ratings at the turn level. The overall model was not significant, F (2, 56) = 1.97, p = .15, R^2 = .06, Adjusted R^2 = .03. Controlling for stressor severity and affiliative conversational framing ratings, no individual coefficients were significant predictors for ratings of dominance, (see Table S.9).

Table S.8: Combined Model for Ratings of Affiliation

	b	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
Affiliation Framing (Convo.)	0.19	0.13	1.53	.13	.20
Stressor Severity	0.15	0.19	0.79	.43	.10
Constant	1.75	0.47	3.70	.001	

Table S.9: Combined Model for Ratings of Affiliation

	b	*se*	*t*	*p*	*β*
Dominance Framing (Convo.)	0.16	0.13	1.18	.24	.15
Stressor Severity	-0.31	0.19	-1.59	.12	-.21
Constant	1.70	0.48	3.53	.001	

APPENDIX T: STUDY 2 HLM RESULTS WITH VPC SCORE VARIABLE

First, in Appendix S I generated correlation coefficient estimates for the VPC-turn variable compared to the LPC, MPC, and HPC comfort proportions. Second, because the VPC turn ratio represents the average turn-level ratio, I did not conduct separate analyses for L the predictions in H1-H3. The following results summarize the results of the VPC turn level variable on the dependent variables of affiliation ratings and dominance ratings.

Table T.1: HLM Results with VPC Turn Score for Affiliation Ratings, H1-H3 and RQ4

	H1/H2/H3				RQ4			
	b	*se*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*se*	*z*	*p*
VPC	-0.02	0.08	-0.19	.85	-0.01	0.09	-0.08	.93
Severity					0.33	0.16	2.03	.04*
Receiver Affil. Framing					0.09	0.10	0.91	.36
Intercept	2.49	0.09	28.84	.001*	2.33	0.11	19.74	.001*
				Variance Components				
	var	*se*			*var*	*se*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.60	0.08			.61	0.08		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.15	0.08			.11	0.07		
VPC Turn u_{1j}	0.05	0.03			0.06	0.04		
Stressor Severity u_{2j}					0.00	0.00		
Receiver Affil. Framing u_{3j}					0.00	0.00		
Intraclass Correlation Coefficient	0.21	0.10			0.15	0.09		
Model	Wald $\chi2$ (1) = 0.04, p = .85				Wald $\chi2$ (3) = 5.45, p = .15			

Notes. Table reports two-tailed tests of significance. ± Significant at .05 (one-tailed). *Significant, $p < .05$ (two tailed). **Significant, $p < .01$ (two tailed). *** Significant, $p < .001$ (two tailed).

Table T.2: HLM Results with VPC Turn Score for Dominance Ratings, H1-H3 and RQ4

	H1/H2/H3				RQ4			
	b	*se*	*z*	*p*	*b*	*se*	*z*	*p*
VPC	-0.02	0.08	-0.19	.85	-0.02	0.09	-0.23	.81
Severity					0.40	0.16	2.53	.01**
Receiver Domin. Framing					0.23	0.11	2.09	.04*
Intercept	2.49	0.09	28.84	.001*	2.30	0.11	20.97	.001***
				Variance Components				
	var	*se*			*var*	*se*		
Residual r_{ij}	0.63	0.09			.61	0.09		
Intercept u_{0j}	0.13	0.07			.08	0.08		
VPC Turn u_{1j}	0.05	0.03			0.06	0.04		
Stressor Severity u_{2j}					0.00	0.00		
Receiver Dominance Framing u_{3j}					0.01	0.11		
Intraclass Correlation Coefficient	0.16	0.08			0.12	0.11		
Model	Wald $\chi 2$ (1) = 0.04, p = .85				Wald $\chi 2$ (3) = 5.27, p = .15			

Notes. Table reports two-tailed tests of significance. ± Significant at .05 (one-tailed). *Significant, $p < .05$ (two tailed). **Significant, $p < .01$ (two tailed). *** Significant, $p < .001$ (two tailed).

The results for the RQ4 models reveal similarities to the primary analyses. Unlike the model for H1B, which supported the impact of HPC comfort on turn-level dominance ratings, these associations were not revealed in the analyses with the VPC turn score variable. In these analyses, the average VPC score did not impact ratings of affiliation or dominance.

VITA

Andrea Jean Vickery received her bachelor's degree at Chapman University in Orange, CA in May, 2005. Before pursuing her personal goal of studying communication and relationships, she first worked in the mortgage industry as member of the Kelso Team where she helped many families achieve their goals of home ownership in Orange County, CA. She has called the academic community of Louisiana State University home since 2010, pursuing both her M.A. (2012) and Ph.D. (2016) degrees from there. During her time in the Department of Communication Studies, she worked as a research assistant for Dr. Graham Bodie and taught classes including Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, Business & Professional Communication, and Communication Research. She plans to continue teaching at the college level and pursue a career in academia, where she can continue to research communication and relationships.