

## **ABSTRACT**

SCHAMBERGER, MEGAN KATE. *Contrasting Control Styles in School Consultation.* (Under the direction of William P. Erchul.)

The purpose of this research is to understand the various relational dimensions that characterize the process of behavioral consultation. A relational communication perspective emphasizes that within dyadic interactions (such as those that occur between a consultant and consultee); speakers are constantly redefining their roles, positions, and relationship through conversations (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008). Although communication researchers have emphasized several relational themes that emerge in dyadic interactions (e.g., trust, similarity, depth; Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Millar & Rogers, 1976, 1987), relational communication consultation studies have almost exclusively focused on the theme of relational control (i.e., dominance-submission). This exclusionary focus on relational control has neglected other important relational themes that may characterize consultant-consultee interactions. In this study, participants listened to consultation interviews in which consultants and consultees were characterized as either high or low dominance. After listening to the interviews, participants rated consultants and consultees on several relational dimensions (e.g., involvement, trust, similarity, depth, composure, formality). Results from this study suggest that several relational dimensions are present within consultant-consultee interactions. Additionally, the presence of relational dimensions varies based on both role (i.e., school psychologist or teacher) and level of dominance. In sum, results from this current study suggest that relational dimensions other than dominance are present in consultant-consultee interactions.

Contrasting Control Styles in School Consultation

by  
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## **BIOGRAPHY**

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## Introduction

School consultation is an indirect form of service delivery whereby a consultant (e.g., school psychologist) offers assistance to a consultee (e.g., teacher) who is encountering a specific work-related problem involving one or more clients (e.g., student). Through a process facilitated by the consultant, the consultee develops skills and applies specific intervention strategies to help remediate the current situation and solve similar problems that may occur in the future. The consultee also can use the acquired knowledge to assist a specific student or group of students. In this respect, consultation is an intuitively appealing service delivery option because of its preventative nature and its ability to potentially affect a large number of clients. In addition to this intuitive appeal of consultation, research has demonstrated the efficacy of consultation in producing positive outcomes for both clients and consultees (Medway & Updyke, 1985; Sheridan, Welch, & Orme, 1996).

Along with the emphasis on describing outcomes, the research literature also has focused on the process of consultation. The process of consultation most often involves a series of face-to-face interactions between a consultant and consultee. This series of interactions has been conceptualized in many different ways. For example, Erchul and Martens (2002) have conceptualized school consultation as an interpersonal influence process whereby the consultant uses specific strategies to direct the flow of the conversation. Two important lines of research have helped to support this idea – the social power base and the relational communication perspectives (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008). Relational communication research is the focus of the present research study.

A relational communication perspective acknowledges that people are constantly redefining their relationships through interactions with one another. As verbal messages are exchanged between conversation participants, implicit information is also being conveyed about how each participant regards the other, each participant's understanding of the dyadic relationship, and each person's beliefs about his or her own status in regard to the relationship. Thus, relational communication researchers are often more concerned the process of message exchange than the content of the messages themselves.

Relational communication researchers have postulated that several dimensions can describe the relational messages that are exchanged in dyadic communication (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Millar & Rogers, 1976). After an extensive review of the literature pertaining to communicative behavior, Burgoon and Hale proposed that twelve separate dimensions are important to consider when examining dyadic interactions: (a) dominance-submission; (b) emotional arousal; (c) composure-noncomposure; (d) similarity-dissimilarity; (e) formality-informality; (f) task-orientation-social-orientation; (g) intimacy; and the subcomponents of intimacy, including (h) depth, (i) affection, (j) inclusion-exclusion, (k) trust, and (l) intensity of involvement. These 12 themes have been documented through the Relational Communication Scale (RCS; Burgoon & Hale, 1987). This scale has been used extensively within communication research to better understand the different relational themes that characterize dyadic interactions.

Although communication researchers have proposed several descriptive relational themes, school consultation researchers have almost exclusively focused on the control (i.e., dominance-submission) theme. Research investigating relational control within consultation

has primarily used verbal coding systems to understand consultant-consultee control patterns. These studies have suggested that interactions between a consultant and a consultee are often characterized by one person taking a “leader” role and the other person assuming “follower” role (Erchul, 1987; Erchul, DuPaul, et al., 2007).

Although the focus on relational control has been important to understanding consultant-consultee interactions, there has been a lack of consideration of relational dimensions besides control that may exist within consultation interactions (Erchul, 1999). In order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the process of consultation, other relational themes such as similarity, trust, and depth need to be examined. In addition, the relationship between these unexamined relational themes and the control dimension needs to be established. The purpose of the present research is to develop an initial understanding of additional relational themes that characterize the interactions that occur between a consultant and a consultee.

Although primarily an exploratory study, the results of the current study suggest that other relational dimensions (e.g., trust, depth, similarity, involvement, formality, and composure) characterize consultant-consultee interactions. In addition, results suggest that some of these relational dimensions differ depending on the role (i.e., consultant and consultee) and level of displayed dominance (i.e., high or low). Taken together, this study represents an important first step in understanding the various relational dimensions that are important to the consultation process.

### Overview of Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to introduce the concepts of consultation and relational communication that will form the basis for this research study. This review will begin by broadly defining human services consultation as a context for understanding the consulting role for a school psychologist. The definition, importance, and efficacy of school consultation, particularly behavioral consultation, will also be described. Within this review, school consultation is viewed as an interpersonal influence process whereby a consultant alters the attitudes, beliefs, and/or practices of a consultee in order to solve problems. Evidence of this perspective is derived from studies of relational communication that have focused on issues of interpersonal control within consultant/consultee interviews. Relational communication theory is described along with several studies that have utilized relational coding schemes to understand interpersonal influence in consultation. As a result of this research, some have questioned the collaborative nature of consultation. It will be argued that this debate, known as the *collaboration debate*, developed in part because of the narrow focus placed on control in relational communication consultation studies. Communication researchers such as Burgoon and Hale (1984) have proposed that additional relational dimensions exist in interpersonal communication and a limited focus on control can miss important themes that arise in conversations. Burgoon and Hale developed a scale, the Relational Communication Scale (RCS), which measures multiple themes of relational communication. The logic of applying this scale to studies of school consultation will subsequently be discussed.

### Introduction to Human Services Consultation

Human services consultation is an indirect form of psychological service delivery. Gerald Caplan, considered by many to be the creator of the modern practice of human services consultation, first utilized this mode of service delivery in the 1940s. It was during this time that Caplan and his staff faced the challenge of providing mental health services to over 16,000 adolescents at over 100 clinical centers in post-war Israel. In addition to the sizable number of clients, these adolescents presented with a variety of mental health problems and concerns. Faced with this seemingly laborious task, Caplan and his colleagues devised a way to meet the mental health needs of a large number of heterogeneous clients. The overwhelming nature of the situation enabled Caplan to reason that his small clinical staff would not be effective in delivering mental health services directly to adolescents. Instead, Caplan believed that his staff would be more effective by training the Israeli clinic personnel to directly deliver mental health services. In this respect, the clinic personnel would be effective at remediating current problems while concurrently building skills to deal with other emerging problems. Caplan's proposition led to what is now commonly referred to as mental health consultation (Caplan, 1970; Erchul & Martens, 2002).

Caplan (1970) defined mental health consultation as:

a process of interaction between two professional persons, the consultant, who is a specialist, and the consultee, who invokes his help in regard to a current work problem with which the latter is having some difficulty, and which he has decided is within the former's area of specialized competence. The work problem involves the management or treatment of one or more clients of the

consultee, or the planning or implementation of a program to cater to such clients. (p.19)

Caplan's definition highlights some key assumptions of a consultation approach to service delivery. To begin with, consultation is a triadic relationship involving a consultant, consultee, and client. The consultant provides help and support to the consultee, who is currently encountering a work-related problem with a client. This help is provided through one or more direct interactions (i.e., face-to-face discussions) between a consultant and a consultee. In turn, the consultee delivers direct services to the client. Therefore, service delivery is indirect in that the consultant delivers mental health services to the client through the consultee. This assumption differs from many other modes of service delivery such as therapy, where a service provider directly intervenes with a client and the primary focus tends to be on personal problems.

Today, consultation is perceived by many to be an effective mode of service delivery (Medway & Updyke, 1985; Sheridan et al., 1996). Consultation is utilized by a variety of professionals (e.g., social workers, community mental health professionals, nurses, doctors) and in various settings (e.g., schools, hospitals, business organizations, community mental health centers). A medical specialist may consult with another doctor about appropriate treatment for a particular patient. A manager may consult with an organizational specialist about particular problems that he/she is encountering with his/her staff. A special education teacher may consult with a classroom teacher about effective reading strategies to be used with a particular student. These examples highlight how consultation can be used by a variety of professionals in many different settings.

In sum, human services consultation originated with the work of Gerald Caplan. Caplan reasoned that in order to affect the mental health needs of a large number and variety of clients, service providers must provide those directly involved with clients with the knowledge and skills to remediate current problems and to prevent future problems. Caplan termed this mode of service delivery mental health consultation. Today, consultation is used by a variety of professionals in a variety of fields. As will be discussed in the next section, school psychology is one profession that has adopted consultation as a way of providing services to a large number of clients.

### School Consultation

#### *Roles of a School Psychologist*

School psychology is a discipline that has embraced the professional role of consultation as a primary way of delivering services to clients. In school consultation, a school psychologist frequently is the consultant, a teacher is the consultee, and a student or group of students is the client. Historically, school psychologists in educational settings have assumed three major professional roles: assessment, intervention, and consultation. Surveys in recent decades have shown that school psychologists report that 52-55% of their time is spent in assessment activities; 21-26% is spent in interventions activities; 19-22% is spent in consultation activities; and another 1-2%, in research and program evaluation activities (Fagan & Wise, 2000). Although school psychologists report spending the majority of their time conducting psychoeducational assessments, surveys of preferred roles indicate that they prefer that less time be spent on assessment and more time be spent in intervention and consultation activities (Hosp & Reschly, 2002; Reschly & Wilson, 1995). Results from a

survey study conducted by Hosp and Reschly showed that school psychologists prefer that 33% of their time be spent in a consulting role. One reason that consultation may appeal to school psychologists is that a consultant's role often subsumes intervention. The focus of school-based consultation is on selecting, carrying out, and monitoring research-based interventions through direct interactions with a consultee. The various other services that can be provided under consultation can contribute to it being a desired activity for school psychologists.

*Definition and Importance of School Consultation*

School consultation has been conceptualized and defined in many different ways. Specific models of consultation, such as behavioral consultation and mental health consultation, have significantly influenced the way consultation is understood and carried out within a school system. Erchul and Martens (2002) have indicated that school consultation is best understood as a series of tasks that must be integrated throughout consultation to ensure the effectiveness of services. Their "integrated model of school consultation" includes three primary tasks (i.e., problem-solving task, support and development task, and social influence task) that should be incorporated during the consultation process. Erchul and Martens provided the following definition of school consultation:

School consultation is a process for providing psychological and educational services in which a specialist (consultant) works cooperatively with a staff member (consultee) to improve the learning and adjustment of a student (client) or group of students. During face-to-face interactions, the consultant helps the consultee through systematic problem solving, social influence, and

professional support. In turn, the consultee helps the client(s) through selecting and implementing effective school-based interventions. In all cases, school consultation serves a remedial function and has the potential to serve a preventative function. (p. 13-14)

Along with highlighting the three main tasks of school consultation, the Erchul and Martens (2002) definition also emphasizes the preventative nature of consultation. That is, consultation is an important activity for school psychologists because it is not only preferred but also is a way to prevent future problems. Unlike other roles that a school psychologist may take on (e.g., conducting an assessment or carrying out an intervention), consultation can be both reactive and proactive (Fagan & Wise, 2000). For example, consulting with a teacher on effective behavioral strategies for a child can assist the teacher in dealing with that particular child. In addition, the teacher can use the same behavioral strategies in the future so similar problems with other children may be detected and treated early on. The importance of consultation also rests on its potential to affect a large number of students. Instead of working one-on-one with a particular child, a consultant is imparting new ideas, knowledge, and skills to a consultee who works with a larger number of children. Thus, the ability of consultation to affect a large number of children and its preventative nature make it an important role for school psychologists.

#### *Efficacy of School Consultation*

In order for a mode of service delivery to be recommended and pursued in practice, research must demonstrate it to be effective. As more emphasis is placed on accountability and evidence-based practice, the need to show that consultation is effective becomes even

more crucial. Before considering this literature, it is important to note that most consultation studies have limitations because of the complexities of consultation service delivery.

Because consultation is a service that benefits one individual (i.e., client) through interactions with another individual (i.e., consultee), it is hard to determine direct effects. Second, the process of consultation inherently involves some type of an intervention component.

Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the effects of the treatment are due to the consultation itself or other confounding variables (Erchul & Martens, 2002).

Meta-analysis has been the major statistical procedure used to study the effectiveness of consultation. This procedure combines the results of many related studies using a standardized statistic (i.e., effect size) that describes the effects of a specific treatment. Although not specific to school-based settings, Medway and Updyke (1985) conducted one of the first large scale meta-analyses to describe the effects of psychological consultation. In this meta-analysis, results were considered from 54 controlled studies of psychological consultation published between 1958 and 1982. Outcomes studied included changes in attitudinal, behavioral, and/or school achievement for consultees and clients. The meta-analysis yielded a total of 192 outcomes that were averaged to produce an effect size of .47 for consultation as compared to no treatment conditions. The effect size was even larger, .71, when all of the studies were given equal weight. Additionally, this meta-analysis showed that the average effect size was .39 for clients and .55 for consultees. Medway and Updyke's study was the first major step in demonstrating the efficacy of psychological consultation.

In a second empirical review, Sheridan et al. (1996) considered the findings of 46 consultation studies conducted between 1985 and 1995. The primary outcome variables

examined were changes in the consultee (e.g., attitudes, behaviors), client (e.g., measures of performance), and/or system (e.g., referrals to special education). Results showed that consultation produced positive results in 76% of the reviewed studies. Although the authors noted that there were methodological problems with much of the consultation research reviewed (e.g., lack of widespread usage of experimental designs, inconsistency in measurement of outcomes, lack of information provided on treatment integrity), the results of this review also suggest that consultation can be a useful way of delivering psychological services to students within schools.

### *Models of School Consultation*

*Mental health and behavioral consultation.* As mentioned earlier, various models of consultation have arisen over time. Two approaches that have influenced consultation in the schools the most are mental health consultation (Caplan, 1970) and behavioral consultation (Bergan, 1977). Mental health consultation emphasizes that the consultant and consultee engage in a coordinate, nonhierarchical relationship whereby each participant is considered an expert in his or her own domain. Within this model, it is assumed that violating the nonhierarchical relationship will impede progress in consultation. During the consultation process, the consultant provides the consultee with instrumental and emotional support and assists the consultee in overcoming specific barriers such as: lack of knowledge, skill, confidence, and/or objectivity (Brown, Pryzwansky, & Schulte, 2006). In contrast, behavioral consultation, in part emphasizes consultant control over the consultation process. The consultant guides the consultee through a series of problem-solving stages in order to achieve change in the client. The clarity of goals, specific protocol for consultants to follow,

and strong theoretical background have contributed to the behavioral consultation approach being the most widely used model by school psychologists (Costenbader, Swartz, & Petrix, 1992; Erchul & Martens, 2002).

*Background and goals of behavioral consultation.* The behavioral consultation model draws heavily on principles of applied behavior analysis. Ideas such as quantifying variables, focusing on observable events, specifying target behaviors, and evaluating results are central to this model (Kratochwill & Bergan, 1990). Early attempts to adopt behavioral principles to human services consultation came from D’Zurrilla and Goldfried (1971) and Tharp and Wetzel (1969). Drawing from a behavioral perspective, the D’Zurrilla and Godfried model emphasizes the need for consultants to explicitly teach consultees problem-solving skills that can generalize across settings and situations to achieve behavioral change in a client or group of clients. Tharp and Wetzel extended behavioral principles to human services settings and the process of consultation. They identified the roles that people assume in a consultation relationship. Similar to current models of consultation, the consultant is described as the person who is an expert in behavioral principles and guides the process of consultation, the mediator is described as the person who directly works with a client (or group of clients), and a target is the person with the problem behavior (Erchul & Martens, 2002). These early efforts to apply the principles of behaviorism to consultation directly influenced the behavioral consultation model originally proposed by Bergan (1977) and used by many school psychologist consultants today.

*Stages of behavioral consultation.* The behavioral consultation model is often referred to as a problem-solving model because a four stage problem-solving approach is

used to develop, implement, and evaluate a treatment plan developed within consultation (Bergan, 1977). The four stages contain three distinct yet interrelated interviews between the consultant and consultee and an intervention implementation stage. The first stage of the behavioral consultation model is called the problem identification interview (PII). This interview is the initial formal contact that the consultant has with the consultee. Bergan outlined several objectives that must be achieved within this interview. These objectives include specifying the target problem that the consultee is experiencing with a client or group of clients, objectively describing the behavior of concern and determining the severity, tentatively identifying antecedent events and consequent events that surround the target behavior, establishing and agreeing on data collection procedures, and setting a date for the next interview. Additionally, the consultant inquires about client's strengths and assets (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990). The PII is seen as critical to the problem-solving process, as correctly identifying the problem is important to generating effective solutions for the target problem. Along these lines, results of a study by Bergan and Tombari (1976) showed that correctly identifying the problem accounted for 60% of the variance in plan implementation. Further, actually implementing the discussed plan accounted for 95% of the variance in solving the problem. Therefore, problem identification heavily contributes to the success of consultation.

The second interview, the problem analysis interview (PAI), is conducted following a period of data collection. This interview is often the longest of the three because the consultant must further examine the target problem and identify and design a plan to solve it. The PAI also has a series of objectives that are to be achieved. Within this stage, the

consultant validates the problem behavior by examining the baseline data and determining the data adequacy. Further, the antecedent and consequent conditions surrounding the target behavior are specified with greater precision. The consultant also identifies and describes an intervention plan that is specific to the target behavior and feasible for the consultee to use. Finally, a date is set for the next interview (Bergan, 1977; Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990).

The third stage of the Bergan's behavioral consultation does not consist of a formal interview as in the other three stages. In this stage, plan implementation (PI), the consultant and consultee have brief unstructured meetings to evaluate progress and discuss any issues that may deter plan effectiveness. It is during this stage that the consultee implements the agreed-upon plan with the client. Several objectives must also be met during this stage of the problem-solving process. To begin with, the consultant determines whether the consultee possesses the necessary skills to implement the plan with integrity and competency. The consultant also monitors data collection and the plan operation to check for client progress and integrity of implementation. Finally, if issues do arise, the consultant assesses the need for plan revision (Bergan, 1977; Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990).

The final stage of behavioral consultation is the problem evaluation interview (PEI). Set up as the third formal interview, this stage seeks to evaluate progress and determine the final course of action. Similar to the other stages, several objectives are involved in this stage of the problem-solving process. First, data that were collected during the plan implementation stage are used to determine the extent to which the goals were attained. The consultant and consultee then decide whether the change can be attributed to the implemented intervention. Depending on the progress attained, the consultant and consultee

must then decide whether to continue, modify, or terminate the agreed-upon intervention.

Finally, consultation is either terminated (if the plan was successful) or additional interviews are scheduled (Bergan, 1977; Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990).

In sum, school psychologists often assume the role of a consultant to assist teachers in dealing with classroom problems. The importance of consultation for school psychologists is highlighted by consultation's preventative nature and the ability to affect a large number of students and teachers. Additionally, empirical reviews have suggested that consultation is an effective way to serve the various needs of clients. Several models have influenced the way that consultation is delivered. Mental health consultation emphasizes addressing the needs of a consultee by providing both emotional and instrumental support. Behavioral consultation, the model most frequently used in school settings, is a structured problem-solving process that involves several stages and frequent face-to-face interactions. As models of consultation have been developed and refined, emphasis has also been placed on understanding the process of school consultation. In the next section, the focus is on understanding consultation as an interpersonal influence process. Specifically, the relational communication perspective will be explained and used as one form of evidence for conceptualizing school-based consultation as a process of interpersonal influence.

#### Interpersonal Influence: A Relational Communication Perspective

##### *Consultation as an Interpersonal Influence Process*

Although behavioral consultation has proven to be an effective and popular way of approaching school consultation (Costenbader et al., 1992; Sheridan et al., 1996), elements from other consultation models can also be useful in school settings. This idea forms the

premise of the “integrated model of school consultation” presented by Erchul and Martens (2002). As already mentioned, Erchul and Martens conceive school consultation to be comprised of three separate but interrelated tasks: problem-solving task, social influence, and support and development. The problem-solving task is comprised of the four stages outlined in the behavioral consultation model (Bergan, 1977). The social influence task is based on the idea that a plan will only be effective if a consultant can persuade a consultee to change his or her current beliefs, attitudes, and/or practices. Therefore, a consultant must enact specific strategies to maintain a cooperative relationship and simultaneously persuade the consultee to change his or her behavior. Finally, the support and development task, drawn from the ideas in Caplan’s mental health consultation model, involves providing instrumental and emotional support (Erchul & Martens).

The social influence task has received relatively little attention in the consultation literature; however, it has important implications for the process of school consultation. A consultant who can influence a consultee’s perceptions will be more effective in the problem-solving process than a consultant who simply provides the consultee with information. Because of the necessity of consultant persuasion, school consultation may be best understood as an interpersonal influence process. The study of interpersonal influence within consultation has relied on two main lines of research. The first, the social power perspective (French & Raven, 1959), is based on the idea that individuals have specific resources they can use to potentially change the behavior of another individual. These resources (i.e., social power bases) may include being similar to the individual, being perceived as an expert by another, or providing information that another person values (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty,

2008). The second line of research, relational communication (Rogers & Escudero, 2004), emphasizes that relationships are established and defined through dynamic interactions between individuals. Within this perspective, interpersonal influence is studied by understanding the degree of relational control that is evident in conversations between individuals (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty). Issues of social power bases are beyond the scope of this paper; relational communication is the focus of the proposed research and therefore will be discussed in detail.

#### *A Relational Communication Perspective*

A relational communication perspective focuses on the communication episodes that unfold between individuals. Burgoon and Hale (1984) stated that, “as communication episodes are enacted, the nature of the relationship between participants is defined” (p. 193). In other words, as messages are exchanged, ideas about how people regard one another and the nature of their relationship are also transmitted. Because of the changing nature of messages throughout the course of a conversation, it is assumed that the relationship between individuals is constantly being redefined, altered, or renegotiated. Relational communication researchers emphasize that the form of the message and the process of message exchange, as opposed to the message content, dictate the nature of the relationship between individuals. The view from this perspective is that it is “not what we say, but how we say it” that influences our perceptions of others and their perceptions of us. In addition, the relational communication perspective focuses on the dyad as opposed to the individual. In turn, when analyzing messages, the focus is placed on paired message sequences instead of a single

message (Rogers & Escudero, 2004). As Rogers and Farace (1975) have written, “relational variables do not lie within individual interactions, but rather exist between them” (p. 306).

Today’s ideas about relational communication are clearly linked to the writings of anthropologist Gregory Bateson. While studying the Iatmul tribe of New Guinea, Bateson theorized that communication was best understood by studying the transactions between individuals as opposed to solely focusing on single messages. In addition, Bateson believed that there were different levels of message meaning. On one level, information is conveyed; this level is known as the “report” level and is best understood as the content or what is said in a message. A second level of meaning is known as the “command” level; at this level, the focus is on the process of message exchange and the relational meanings that are transmitted in the delivery of the message. It is through this level that the relationship between the communicators is defined (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008; Rogers & Escudero, 2004).

In addition to proposing different levels of message meaning, Bateson also developed the theory of *schismogenesis* as a way of describing social interactions among individuals. This theory is based on the ideas of symmetry and complementarity. In interpersonal interactions, *symmetry* exists when communicators use similar styles of communication. An example is when one person transmits an assertive message and the other person responds with an assertive message. Bateson proposed that a pattern of competition or rivalry is evident in symmetrical communication transactions. *Complementarity* exists when communicators use very different interactional styles in communicating with one another. An example would be a communicator responding submissively to an assertive command by another. Too much complementarity or symmetry in interpersonal interactions can lead to

the eventual breakdown of the relationship (i.e., schismogenesis). Combining the communication patterns of symmetry and complementarity is likely to lead to a better outcome for the relationship. In Bateson's terms, this is known as *reciprocity* (Rogers & Escudero, 2004).

Bateson's ideas came to the attention of communication researchers in the 1950s while he was working at Palo Alto's Mental Research Institute. It was during this time that Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) wrote *The Pragmatics of Human Communication*. This text shifted the beliefs about the function of communication in establishing and sustaining relationships. Prior to this book, many researchers focused on the intrapsychic aspects of the individual as the crucial variables to understanding social behavior. Conversely, the authors of *Pragmatics* emphasized observing communication transactions in order to understand social relationships. Watzlawick et al. proposed five axioms that have become the basis of the relational communication perspective. The first is that each message influences the next message and is influenced by the previous message. Thus, communication is best understood through interpersonal transactions (as opposed to single messages). The second axiom distinguishes between the report and command levels of message meaning. The third axiom suggests that a message's meaning is influenced by the way that it is structured or organized. In a similar sense, messages can be conveyed both digitally (i.e., in syntax) and analogically (i.e., through nonverbal behavior and semantics). The final axiom states that interactions can be classified as being symmetrical or complementary. These axioms form the foundations of current relational communication thinking (Rogers & Escudero, 2004).

*The Relational Communication Control Coding System*

Building upon earlier work of Sluzki and Beavin (1965) and Mark (1971) and their verbal interaction coding schemes, Rogers (1972) developed the relational communication control coding system (RCCCS). The RCCCS has been used, and adapted for use, in dyadic and small group communication analyses such as in individual therapy, marriage counseling, family therapy, and organizational dynamics. The RCCCS was designed so that the unit of analysis is the transaction between individuals. Thus, paired message sequences as opposed to single messages are the primary focus. In this system, each message is assigned a three digit code, where the first digit identifies the speaker, the second digit identifies the grammatical format of the message (i.e., assertion, question, talk-over, noncomplete, other), and the third digit identifies the response mode or the function of the message in relation to the prior message (i.e., support, non-support, extension, answer, instruction, order, disconfirmation, topic change, self-instruction, other) (see Table 1 for a descriptions of coding categories). Based on the three digit codes that are assigned to a message, the message is then assigned a *control code*. A message is considered *one-up* (↑) if it represents an attempt to control the conversation and define the relationship between the speakers. In contrast, a message is considered to be *one-down* (↓) if the speaker submits to the other's attempts to control the conversation. Finally, a message is considered *one-across* (→) if it represents no controlling maneuver or an attempt to balance the relationship.

Following control code assignment, paired message sequences can be analyzed and placed into one of three transactional categories: symmetrical, complementary, or transitory.

Table 1

*Definitions from Rogers and Farace's (1975) RCCCS Coding Categories*

1 <sup>st</sup> Digit: Speaker Identity	2 <sup>nd</sup> Digit: Format	3 <sup>rd</sup> Digit: Response Mode
Speaker A	<i>Assertion:</i> A complete referential statement expressed in either declarative or imperative form.	<i>Support:</i> A statement that offers or seeks support, assistance, and/or approval from another.
Speaker B	<p><i>Question:</i> A messages in the interrogative form.</p> <p><i>Talk-over:</i> a message that interrupts a message by another.</p> <p><i>Non-Complete:</i> A statement that is initiated, but left unfinished.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Any message that does not fit into the other categories.</p>	<p><i>Non-Support:</i> A message that shows disapproval, rejection, or resistance.</p> <p><i>Extension:</i> A message that continue the flow or theme of the previous message.</p> <p><i>Answer:</i> A message that provides a definitive response to a question.</p> <p><i>Instruction:</i> A suggestive and evaluative statement that is often accompanied with qualifications and clarifications.</p> <p><i>Order:</i> An unqualified (usually imperative) message that provides little or no explanation.</p> <p><i>Disconfirmation:</i> A message that ignores another's speakers request in the prior message.</p> <p><i>Topic Change:</i> A message that has discontinues the theme of the previous message.</p> <p><i>Self-Instruction:</i> A message that reflects back on what the self should do or feel.</p> <p><i>Other:</i> Any message that does not fit into the other categories.</p>

\*Note. Adapted from Table 2.2 in Rogers & Escudero (2004)

*Symmetrical transactions* occur when each message has the same control direction.

Competitive symmetry occurs when each person displays a one-up message ( $\uparrow\uparrow$ ), submissive symmetry occurs when each person states a one-down message ( $\downarrow\downarrow$ ), and neutralized symmetry takes place when each message is designated a one-across ( $\rightarrow\rightarrow$ ). *Complementary transactions* occur when messages are dissimilar in direction, such as when one participant attempts to control the conversation and the other speaker acquiesces or when one provides a submissive message and the other attempts to assert control. Thus, complementarity occurs when the control codes are opposite ( $\uparrow\downarrow, \downarrow\uparrow$ ). Finally, *transitory transactions* occur when at least one of the messages in the paired message sequence is designated a one-across ( $\uparrow\rightarrow, \downarrow\rightarrow, \rightarrow\uparrow, \rightarrow\downarrow$ ). These three transactional categories provide a way of describing and characterizing dyadic interpersonal interactions (Rogers & Escudero, 2004; Rogers & Farace, 1975).

Relational communication research has typically focused on understanding the control differences between two people engaged in a communication exchange. Several indices of control can be derived from the RCCCS to better understand these differences. One index, called *domineeringness*, is the number of one-up messages displayed by one person without regard to the second speaker's responses to them. It is calculated simply by dividing the number of the speaker's one-up messages by his or her total number of messages. Because relational communication research is typically interested in paired message sequences, however, the RCCCS provides another index that takes into account the other person's responses to the first speaker's one-up messages. *Dominance* is the frequency that a speaker's one-up messages are responded to by one-down messages by the other

speaker. In other words, dominance is characterized by the number of times that one speaker's attempts to control the conversation are accepted by the other person (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008; Rogers & Escudero, 2004).

### *School Consultation and Relational Communication*

In the past two decades, school consultation researchers have applied a relational framework to understand relational control in consultant/consultee interactions. Much of that research has utilized verbal coding systems as a method of understanding consultant interactions, interpersonal influence, and relational dynamics (see Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008 for a review of consultation studies that have used verbal coding systems).

Although several consultation studies have used verbal coding systems, the Erchul (1987) and Erchul, DuPaul et al. (2007) studies will be described below because of their exclusive use of the RCCCS. In addition, the Erchul, DuPaul, et al. study is reviewed because of its methodological relevance to the current research. In the first published study using the RCCCS, Erchul (1987) examined relational control within eight dyads engaged in behavioral consultation. All three behavioral consultation interviews (i.e., PII, PAI, PEI) were coded according to the procedures specified by the RCCCS. Various outcome measures were utilized, including consultee perceptions of consultant effectiveness and consultant perceptions of teacher's willingness to participate in various parts of consultation (e.g., collect baseline data, intervention implementation). Results from RCCCS analysis indicated that consultants' domineeringness and dominance scores were significantly higher than those of consultees in all stages of behavioral consultation. In addition, greater teacher domineeringness was associated with consultant perceptions of less willingness to participate

in baseline data collection ( $r = -.81, p < .02$ ). Finally, consultant dominance was correlated with higher evaluations from consultees of consultant effectiveness. Although this last finding was not significant at the .05 level, the relationship did approach significance ( $r = .65, p < .08$ ). Erchul concluded that results suggested that behavioral consultants were in control of in all consultant/consultee interactions, teachers with a high level of domineeringness were perceived by consultants as less likely to participate in baseline data collection, and higher consultant dominance was associated with consultee perceptions of greater consultant effectiveness.

In a similar study conducted by Erchul, DuPaul, and colleagues (2007), the RCCCS was used to examine how relational control relates to various consultation outcomes such as treatment acceptability, treatment effectiveness, treatment integrity, and ratings of student progress-to-target behavior. This study utilized students from Lehigh University's Project PASS (Promoting Academic Success for Students). Project PASS is a study of the effectiveness of academic consultation for students with ADHD. Specifically, this project was designed to compare the effectiveness of "consultation as usual" to a form of consultation that integrates "individualized academic interventions" (IAI). The consultation as usual condition represented a typical consultation interaction where a teacher is allowed to choose interventions based on his or her perceptions of feasibility and effectiveness, as opposed to the IAI condition where the consultant provides a teacher with a limited number of specific interventions that are pre-selected based on student and teacher observation. The purpose of the Erchul, DuPaul, et al. study was to examine the interpersonal interactions between the consultant and consultee during the PII. The PII was the sole interview used,

based on its reliability as a sample of consultant/consultee relational communication behavior (Erchul & Schulte, 1990) and the fact that successful problem identification has been linked to problem solution (Bergan & Tombari, 1976).

In that Erchul (1987) showed that consultant dominance is related to positive outcomes and teacher domineeringness is related to negative outcomes, Erchul, DuPaul, et al. (2007) proposed two hypotheses: (a) consultant dominance would be positively related to consultation outcomes, and (b) teacher dominance would be negatively related to consultation outcomes. In order to test these hypotheses, 42 IAI PIIs were transcribed and independently coded by two individuals using the RCCCS. Inter-coder reliability, (assessed by using Cohen's kappa) was calculated to be .96 for the second-digit codes (i.e., grammatical form) and .91 for the third-digit code (i.e., response mode) (Erchul, DuPaul, et al.).

Results showed that consultants and teachers displayed about equal amounts of dominance, but almost twice as much domineeringness was exhibited by consultants. A second interesting finding was that the consultant/teacher dominance scores were inversely related. That is, as Person A's successful influence over Person B increased, Person B's successful influence over the Person A decreased. This finding suggests that consultation is best characterized as a leader-follower relationship where one person assumes control of the communication process while the other plays a more subservient, follower role. Findings from analyzing process-outcome data were also discussed. Results showed that teacher dominance was positively correlated with (a) teacher ratings of treatment effectiveness ( $r = .48, p < .02$ ) and (b) student progress toward targeted outcome ( $r = .33, p < .05$ ), but

negatively correlated with consultant observations of treatment integrity ( $r = -.32, p < .054$ ). The authors noted the oddity that high teacher dominance is associated with consultee perceived effectiveness and student progress, but also with consultant observations of low treatment integrity. Therefore, support was not found for the first hypothesis that consultant dominance would be positively related to consultation outcomes. The second hypothesis, that consultee dominance would be negatively related to outcomes, was only partially supported. Although teacher dominance was associated with lower ratings of treatment integrity, it was also associated with higher effectiveness and student progress teacher ratings (Erchul, DuPaul, et al., 2007).

Erchul, DuPaul, et al. (2007) suggested several possible explanations for the unexpected findings. First, the consultations under examination were academically oriented as opposed to behaviorally oriented, as were many of the cases in the Erchul (1987) study. Second, several teachers involved wanted assistance in behavioral concerns as well as academic concerns. This may have led to consultants' compliance (and consequently higher teacher dominance ratings) with the teacher's requests to address the behavioral problems of the ADHD students. Third, consultants involved in the project were graduate students with limited professional experience, while the teachers generally had more professional experience. Because prior research had demonstrated that certain characteristics such as age and experience influence receptivity to consultation (Martin & Curtis, 1980), the authors suggested that it is reasonable that these variables influenced results.

*Conclusions from Examining Consultation from a Relational Perspective*

Several implications can be drawn from examining verbal processes studies of school consultation. First, results from these studies lend support to the idea that consultation can be conceived of as an interpersonal influence process. Many of these studies have demonstrated that consultant control over the consultation and that consultant control can lead to positive outcomes (e.g., Erchul, 1987; Witt, Erchul, McKee, Purdue, & Wickstrom, 1991). Researchers have also suggested that behavioral consultation can be characterized by a “complementary, leader-follower, cooperative relationship” (Erchul, DuPaul, et al., 2007, p. 14). Furthermore, research on verbal processes in school consultation has demonstrated the importance of communication in consultation. Relational communication studies in particular suggest that consultants should pay attention not only to what they say (i.e., report/content), but also should be cognizant of how (i.e., command/process) they communicate their knowledge and beliefs to consultees.

The Collaboration Debate

The study of relational communication within consultation, and in particular the concept of relational control, has partly led to what is known as the “collaboration debate” within consultation. This debate was most clearly articulated in a series of articles debating conceptualizations of collaboration within consultation (Erchul, 1999; Gutkin, 1999a, 1999b). At issue was the nature of the consultant-consultee relationship as it relates to consultation within school psychology. This debate arose partly in response to ambiguity of the term “collaboration.” Prior to this debate, it was noted that many researchers and practitioners conceptualized relationships as collaborative without really defining the

meaning of the term. Further, the relational communication studies emphasized consultant directiveness through terms such as dominance and domineeringness. These terms were perceived by some to be polar opposites of the term collaboration. Therefore, many consultants did not understand how one could be both directive and collaborative when interacting with consultees.

In a review of the consultation literature, Gutkin (1999a) traced the history of collaboration within school consultation studies. He stated that, prior to the late 1980s, most researchers and practitioners universally accepted the idea that collaboration was a necessary component to the school consultation process. In other words, one could not consult with consultees without being collaborative. Gutkin suggested several reasons that this assumption was widely accepted by researchers and practitioners. First, most consultation problems did not have a definitive answer; therefore, consultants needed the assistance of consultees because they possessed more knowledge about the client and the classroom environment and could help to generate feasible solutions. Second, the majority of interventions were carried out by consultees; therefore, consultants relied on consultees to implement the interventions correctly. Third, consultants were seen as “outsiders” who had no real power to force consultees to comply with intervention ideas. Finally, most consultants believed that they would not be able to achieve results without getting teachers to understand the necessity of intervention through collaborative discussions. These four reasons led to the widespread notion that consultation was, and had to be, collaborative.

Toward the end of the 1980s, however, researchers started to question whether consultation was really a collaborative endeavor. Research had provided little empirical

evidence to support the role of collaboration in consultation and several verbal process research studies such as Erchul (1987), Erchul and Chewing (1990), and Witt et al. (1991) had begun to suggest evidence to the contrary. Specifically, researchers had empirical evidence that supported the claim that behavioral consultation was a consultant-directed process. According to Gutkin (1999a), the initial research done on verbal processes in behavioral consultation challenged the previous held notion that all consultation was collaborative and that collaborative consultation was the only effective approach. In the past two decades, several research studies (Erchul, Covington, Hughes, & Meyers, 1995; Erchul, Hughes, Meyers, Hickman, & Braden, 1992; Gutkin, 1996, Hughes and DeForest, 1993; Wickstrom, Jones, LaFleur, & Witt, 1998) were conducted that further contributed to the collaboration debate. Although several researchers continued to classify consultation as a collaborative partnership where each partner has a unique but equally important role (Gutkin, 1996), others characterized consultation as a leader-follower, cooperative relationship (Erchul et al., 1995). Taken together, these studies suggest that consultants may hold very different views about the process of school consultation (Gutkin, 1999a).

After reviewing the consultation literature and providing several alternative interpretations for consultation studies, Gutkin (1999a) suggested five apparent consistencies in the findings of consultation research. Gutkin stated that: (a) consultees are not passive during consultation, (b) consultants do not unilaterally control or direct consultation sessions, (c) consultee leadership is not associated with poor consultation outcomes, (d) consultant directiveness is not harmful to the consultation process, and (e) consultants and consultees do not behave in the same way during consultation. In an attempt to put an end to the

collaboration debate of consultation, Gutkin proposed a 2 X 2 grid model of conceptualizing collaboration in school consultation. Within his model and based on assertions by Erchul (1992), Gutkin stated that collaboration and directiveness are not dichotomous. In other words, a consultant can be both directive and collaborative at the same time. The opposite of collaboration is the notion of coercion. Gutkin suggested that consultants should avoid being coercive when interacting with consultees, but could be directive and be effective.

In response to Gutkin's (1999a) review of the collaboration debate, Erchul (1999) stated that Gutkin's model is a, "well-reasoned conceptual follow-up to an earlier suggestion that collaboration and control likely constitute a false dichotomy" (p. 197). Although the basic conceptualizations of the consultation process are depicted in Gutkin's model, Erchul stated that the model should be extended to fully adopt the interpersonal or relational perspective. Specifically, consultation is best understood as a series of dyadic interactions between a consultant and a consultee. Gutkin's model takes into account several dimensions of consultant behavior (e.g., collaborative, coercive, directive, non-directive), but tends to ignore consultee behavior. In this respect, the way that consultants and consultees respond to one another's behavior is excluded from Gutkin's model. According to Erchul, the model cannot be conceived as truly relational in nature and does not capture the true essence of consultant/consultee interactions. Gutkin (1999b) later revised his model to take into incorporate the relational perspective.

Erchul (1999) also criticized Gutkin for failing to scientifically or operationally define the term "collaboration." He stated that the collaboration debate cannot be fully resolved until a consensus about the operational definition of collaboration can be reached.

The confusion about the term “collaboration” is also discussed by Schulte and Osborne (2003). They described six different viewpoints or models of collaboration that have been discussed in the consultation literature: equal-but-different roles, peer facilitator, unique service-delivery model, consultant-structured consultee participation, shared assent to variable roles, and equal value/equal power. Schulte and Osborne stated that the “differences among views are not trivial” and “the consultant’s and consultee’s actions might be interpreted quite differently depending on one’s implicit view of collaboration” (p. 127). Additionally, Gutkin (1999b) asserted that the common sense or “daily” definitions of collaboration also needs due consideration within this debate. Taken together, the differential definitions purposed by many researchers suggest that there will continue to be debate over the term “collaboration” and the true nature of the consultation process.

In sum, the collaboration debate arose in response to the confusion over how to define and understand the consultation process. A major issue within this debate was ambiguity over the term “collaboration” and whether consultation could truly be considered collaborative in nature. A major contributor to this debate was the research on relational control and in particular terms such as dominance and domineeringness. In the next section, it will be argued that the relational communication perspective acknowledges relational dimensions other than “control.” A better knowledge and understanding of these different relational themes within the context of consultation can assist consultation researchers in understanding consultant/consultee interactions and help to alleviate some of the concerns raised in the collaboration debate.

### Considering Other Relational Themes: Moving Beyond Control

With particular importance to the proposed research, Erchul (1999) asserted:

Given what has apparently blossomed into a major issue for our field, I have wondered if this debate would even exist today if communication researchers had advanced verbal interaction coding systems for the dimensions of relational communication identified as trust, intimacy, inclusion-exclusion, and similarity...comparable to those they developed for control and dominance-submission in the 1970s. (p. 191)

This statement points out one of the major flaws of relational communication research to date: the narrow focus on control. Indeed, other themes such as intimacy, trust, and similarity have been investigated, developed, and operationalized by communication researchers (Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Millar & Rogers, 1976, 1987); however, their role within the interpersonal interactions that exist between a consultant and consultee are relatively unknown when compared to the control dimension. Communication and consultation researchers have suggested that the knowledge about relational communication and the processes that exist within consultation could possibly be enriched by examining other important relational themes (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008; Rogers & Escudero, 2004). Several of these themes are described below along with a rating scale that has been developed to help to operationalize and measure the different relational dimensions that arise in communication.

*Control, Trust, and Intimacy*

As many communication researchers began to adopt a relational perspective in the 1970s, there became a need to explain the structure and themes that were apparent in interpersonal communication episodes. Specifically, researchers needed a way to classify and describe relational messages that were exchanged in dyads. Millar and Rogers (1976, 1987) suggested that three themes were apparent upon analyzing the literature on social relationships: *control*, *trust*, and *intimacy*. Although Millar and Rogers contended that their typology is not intended to be exhaustive, it was their belief that most communicative behavior could be described in terms of these three concepts.

*Control.* As mentioned above, control is the dimension that has received the most attention within consultation research and more broadly in the study of interpersonal communication. Millar and Rogers (1976) conceptualized the control dimension as involving the right of an individual to direct the current communicative episode and to define the relationship. The dimension of control exists within conversations as members involved in them continually redefine and reconceptualize the current relationship through verbal and nonverbal actions. It is notable that Millar and Rogers indicated that control is not completely synonymous with the term dominance, although dominance is the most frequent measure of interpersonal control. The control pattern within a dyadic relationship is defined by both members within the interaction. Therefore, a person who emits a one-down movement may also be trying to exert control within a communicative episode (perhaps by trying to be defined as submissive by the other partner). In order to understand the control

theme more concretely, Millar and Rogers conceptualized control as the vertical physical distance that exists between two individuals in a conversation.

*Trust.* A second relational dimension mentioned by Millar and Rogers (1976, 1987) is the dimension of trust. In contrast to the here-and-now dimension of control, the trust dimension is concerned with future predictions. Within series of interpersonal interactions, people are not only concerned with defining relationships, but also with being able to predict future behavior within the relationship. According to Millar and Rogers, if a person can predict another person's behavior with some certainty, he or she is determined to be trustworthy. Trust is characteristic of a relationship that is highly predictable or a relationship in which one member can adequately predict the other's behavior toward him or her. An important construct within the dimension of trust is *vulnerability*. By trusting another, a person is putting him or herself in a position of vulnerability. In other words, trusting another can also be considered an admittance of vulnerability or an admission that one depends on the other. In conceptualizing trust as physical distance, Millar and Rogers have noted that trust is the width that exists between two people when engaged in interpersonal interactions.

*Intimacy.* The third and final dimension within the Millar and Rogers (1976, 1987) typology is intimacy. Within this dimension are notions of attachment and self-confirmation. Intimacy is the dimension that separates generic social encounters from deeper interpersonal relationships. This theme concerns how connected we feel to the other person with whom we are engaged in a conversation. Temporally, intimacy relates to patterns of sentiments that were exchanged in the past and currently influence the degree of connection that we feel to a

person. These patterns also serve to inform the participants of the shared uniqueness and exclusivity of the relationship and are a source of self-confirmation. Unlike the other two dimensions, intimacy involves perceptions of how the other feels toward him or her as opposed to consisting solely of observed behaviors. Millar and Rogers have described intimacy as the physical depth of the relationship that exists between people involved in interpersonal interactions.

*Burgoon and Hale's Twelve Topoi of Relational Communication*

By the mid-1980s, relational communication research had become a widely accepted way of perceiving interpersonal interactions. However, Burgoon and Hale (1984) asserted that relational communication researchers had not yet provided a detailed and comprehensive description of the variety of themes that are present in communication episodes. They believed that the focus solely on control with only minor references to other themes (e.g., trust, intimacy) was overly simplistic. Burgoon and Hale took the position that this reductionist perspective promoted, “an unduly narrow, simplistic view of relational communication content” (p. 194). In other words, relational communication researchers may “miss the boat” by only concentrating on a few dimensions when examining interpersonal interactions. According to Burgoon and Hale, a deeper understanding of relational communication and the way that people derive meaning from interpersonal interactions can be ascertained by examining all the possible themes that arise in communicative transactions.

In order to understand all the possible dimensions of relational communication, Burgoon and Hale (1984) examined a diverse literature from anthropological, psychotherapeutic, biological, semantic, communicative, and sociological writings and

deciphered 12 common distinct yet interrelated themes that were applicable to relational communication. The results of this literature search are discussed below.

*Anthropological and psychotherapeutic origins.* Burgoon and Hale (1984) began their investigation of themes in relational communication by examining writings from the disciplines of anthropology and psychotherapy. In accordance with other researchers and theorists, Burgoon and Hale traced the beginnings of relational communication research to Bateson (discussed earlier). Based upon Bateson's earlier anthropological writings and his later writings with the Palo Alto group, Burgoon and Hale derived evidence for the widely recognized theme of *dominance-submission* (commonly referred to as control).

Evidence for other relational themes comes from the writings of Schutz and Leary. Schutz asserted that individuals have three needs when they are involved in interpersonal relationships: (a) inclusion (the concern over one's own availability and connectedness to others); (b) affection (the perception that others desire closeness with the individual); and (c) control (feeling that one has some influence over others). Leary proposed 16 themes that arise in interpersonal behavior. According to Leary, these 16 themes can be accounted for by two overreaching dimensions: dominance-submission and love-hate.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) proposed that three principal dimensions or themes of relational communication are apparent when analyzing the writings of Bateson, Leary, and Schultz: *dominance-submission*, *affection-hostility*, and *inclusion-exclusion*. According to Burgoon and Hale, these dimensions are a beginning to understanding relational communication but can be further elaborated on and broken down into different facets. Further evidence for these themes and others are made clear through examining literature that

is pertinent to biological displays of communicative behavior, writings on semantic meaning, research into relational perceptions and theories of different relational definitions.

*Biological displays.* Biological displays are those universal communicative behaviors that have evolved to signal similar meaning to those that are part of the same species. Their “universality” is what makes them a powerful force in understanding communication and relational communication themes. Smith (as cited by Burgoon & Hale, 1984) described several biological displays that Burgoon and Hale believed to have relational overtones: attack, escape, bond-limited subset, association, play, copulation, frustration, identification, and probability. Attack and escape can be conceptualized as similar to the *dominance-submission* relational dimension. Additionally, probability refers to the chance that each behavior has of occurring and can also be seen as representative of interpersonal control. Burgoon and Hale interpreted the bond-limited subset as encompassing the non-aggressive biological displays of association, play, and copulation. These behaviors are linked to the aforementioned dimensions of *inclusion-exclusion* and *affection-hostility*.

Finally, frustration and identification can also be seen as representative of new relational dimensions. Frustration refers to aggravation or disappointment from not being able to complete or perform some action to another’s liking. Burgoon and Hale (1984) suggested that frustration can be related to an individual’s emotional reactivity or responsiveness to his or her partner in the course of a relational communication episode. More generally, frustration can be perceived as indicative of what Burgoon and Hale described as an *arousal* theme. Identification refers to the degree of connection that one feels to another based his or her likeness to that person. Burgoon and Hale purported that this

biological display is best characterized as a new relational theme called *similarity*. An individual's degree of similarity (objective or perceived) to another may alter the way he or she perceives or enters the relationship. Therefore, *similarity* is another important dimension of relational communication.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) also cited Andrew's system of displays, which includes: attack, fleeing, defensive threat, protective responses, immobility, exertion, alert responses, and responses elicited by novel and significant stimuli. Due to their similar meanings, these different categories further corroborate those that are in Smith's system. Taken together, the writings on biological displays provide further support and convergent evidence for the relational communication dimensions of *dominance-submission*, *affection-hostility*, and *inclusion-exclusion*. Further, research on biological displays suggests two new themes, *similarity* and *arousal* that are useful when characterizing relational communication episodes.

*Semantic meaning.* Semantic meaning research involves understanding and interpreting the meaning of human interactions. Much of the research from this area that is reviewed by Burgoon and Hale (1984) comes from Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum. Osgood et al. proposed a continuum under which individuals interpret meaning in interpersonal interactions. Burgoon and Hale asserted that we interpret meaning in much the same way that we produce meaning and thus Osgood et al.'s continuum can be seen as relevant to relational communication work. Osgood et al. found that three dimensions of meaning were consistently apparent when studying derivation of meaning in interpersonal interactions: evaluation, potency, and activity. Osgood et al.'s evaluation is likened to the relational

dimension of *affection-hostility* because it holds properties of an individual's assessment of the positivity or negativity in another person's behavior. Similar to the *dominance-submission* dimension, potency assesses strength and weakness. Finally, activity is similar to the *arousal* theme.

Two other relational dimensions are also apparent when Osgood et al. evaluated an individual's interpretation of meaning within human behaviors. They first described the dimension of stability. This dimension shows how calm or controlled a person is in a given situation. Although seemingly similar to the arousal dimension, stability is more related to a person's calmness than emotional responsiveness. In this respect, stability relates to what Burgoon and Hale (1984) called the *composure* dimension. The second dimension mentioned by Osgood et al. is receptivity, which describes how interested or attentive an individual appears to another. Burgoon and Hale suggested that this dimension is most related to the *inclusion-exclusion* dimension, but is distinct enough to warrant its own theme called *intensity of involvement*.

Further evidence for several dimensions already mentioned comes from studies of affect interpretation. In many of these studies, participants are presented with a stimulus such as a picture of a specific facial expression and then are asked to make interpretations. Burgoon and Hale (1984) proposed that results from studies such as these suggest dimensions such as *pleasantness*, *attentiveness*, *activation*, and *control*. These four dimensions are similar to the already mentioned relational dimensions of *affection-hostility*, *intensity of involvement*, *arousal*, and *dominance-submission*, respectively. Taken together, research on semantic meaning provides evidence for five dimensions of relational

communication: *affection-hostility, dominance-submission, composure, intensity of involvement, and arousal.*

*Interpersonal evaluation.* Closely related to theories of semantic meaning is research on interpersonal evaluations. This line of research has relational communication overtones because it involves how people evaluate others and the characteristics that one desires to emit to create a favorable impression. Burgoon and Hale (1984) divided this research on two overarching categories: research involving individual's evaluations of others (also called receiver-based research) and research on ways that individuals try to acquire favorable evaluations of themselves. These two categories of research provide further evidence for several of the different relational dimensions already discussed and also provide several new dimensions that can accurately categorize relational communication.

According to Burgoon and Hale (1984), research into evaluations of others is derived from investigations into source credibility, interpersonal attraction, and the role of the similarity within communication patterns and interpersonal relationships. Source credibility refers to assessments of believability by individuals. Early works of Aristotle and more works by other researchers in the late 1960s and early 1970s suggest several dimensions by which individuals assess the credibility of others: safety, qualification, dynamism, character, competence, extroversion, composure, and sociability. Safety and character deal with how trustworthy a person feels that a source is, and thus introduces the relational dimension of *trust*. The more trustworthy that a person is deemed, the more likely that an individual is to engage in further interactions with him or her. Qualification and competence deal with an individual's perceptions of the expertise of another. Burgoon and Hale equated this to the

*dominance-submission* dimension in that the more that one perceives another to be an expert, the more that he or she will be willing to let the other individual control the conversation.

Dynamism and extroversion deal with how lively or active the person perceives the other to be and is representative of the *arousal* theme. The source credibility dimension of composure directly relates to the relational dimension of *composure*. The more stable or self-controlled a person is perceived to be, the more likely that another will consider him or her as credible. Finally, sociability refers to one's evaluation of friendliness of another.

Burgoon and Hale related this to the relational dimension of *affection-hostility*.

A second line of receiver-based research comes from works on interpersonal attraction. From the research into interpersonal attraction comes three dimensions of attraction (i.e., social, physical, and task) that are relatable to several relational communication themes. The social dimension of attraction is similar to the sociability dimension mentioned in the source credibility work and is equated with the *affection-hostility* relational dimension. The dimension of physical attraction deals with relational themes such as *affection, inclusion, involvement, and arousal*. Burgoon and Hale (1984) stated that these themes can be combined with the dimensions of *trust* and *depth* (mentioned later) to create the broad relational dimension of *intimacy*. The dimension of task attraction introduces a new dimension into the thematic characterization of relational communication (referred to as *task-social orientation*). This dimension deals with how likely one is to want to engage in joint work-related activity with another individual. Burgoon and Hale also stated that the dimension of *similarity* is consistently referred to within the receiver based interpersonal evaluation research. This dimension deals with how likely one is to engage in interpersonal

exchanges with another based on judgments of likeness. The more alike that individuals perceive another, the more likely that one is to communicate with the other.

A second form of interpersonal evaluation research involves how individuals give off messages to guide the impressions of others (i.e., self-presentation). In so far as this research involves communicative messages designed to define a relationship, it can be directly linked to relational communication research. Burgoon and Hale (1984) cited works by Reiss, Fieldbinder, and Abrams who listed several dimensions of self-presentation that are common in this research (i.e., attraction, expertise, status, prestige, believability, and depth).

Attraction refers to projecting an impression that conveys likeability to others and can be equated to relational themes of *affection, inclusion, and intensity of involvement*, and the overreaching theme of *intimacy*. Expertise, status, and prestige all deal with giving off impressions of competence and are similar to the dimension of *dominance-submission*. Individuals also try to give off the impression that they are believable and credible. This dimension of self-presentation is most similar to the relational dimension of *trust*. Finally, the self-presentation dimension of depth introduces a new relational theme. This dimension deals with impressions that the relationship is not superficial, but very familiar. Burgoon and Hale stated that although similar to the intimacy dimension, one can communicate depth of a relationship without necessarily conveying intimacy. Therefore, the dimension of *depth* becomes its own relational theme.

Taken together, the interpersonal evaluation research provides convergent evidence for the relational themes of *dominance-submission, affection-hostility, intensity of involvement, inclusion-exclusion, similarity, arousal, and composure*. The

comprehensiveness of this research also led Burgoon and Hale (1984) to purport that several new dimensions could be extracted from this body of research including: *trust*, *depth-superficiality* and *task-social orientation*. These new dimensions suggest that communication and relationship development is influenced by messages conveying trust, the level of depth of the relationship, and whether the relationship is one focused on activities of work or pleasure.

*Relationship definition and development.* Even more relevant than the interpersonal evaluation literature is research into relationship definition and relationship development. The research in this realm focuses on how relationships between individuals are mutually defined and dynamic in nature. Within this domain, Burgoon and Hale (1984) analyzed the works that pertain to social penetration theory (i.e., the study of how relationships move to deeper levels), intimacy development, interpersonal valence (i.e., the various that factors that combine to create and maintain a relationship), and relational communication to provide further evidence of the multi-faceted nature of relational communication. In reviewing the works of relational communication, Burgoon and Hale cited Millar and Roger's (1976) three dimensions of relational communication (i.e., *trust*, *intimacy*, *control*). Although Burgoon and Hale noted that the Millar and Roger's conceptualization is similar to their approach, they argued that the three themed-view does not go far enough to describe the various dimensions of relational communication.

Research into social penetration theory and communication development provides support for the Burgoon and Hale's (1984) relational themes of *depth*, *similarity*, *arousal*, *composure*, and *intimacy*. In particular, Burgoon and Hale cited the work of Altman and

Taylor, who proposed that greater intimacy within relationships is created by sharing more of an individual's personality with another. To move the relationship to a deeper level, an individual does not only need to share more of him or herself, but also needs to share deeper structures of his or her personality with another person. Burgoon and Hale stated that sharing greater depth and breadth of one's personality can only be done through continuing communication. Further, other research suggests that to move a relationship to a deeper level, the relational messages need to convey feelings of similarity, communicate emotional responsiveness, project feelings of self-control, and convey intimacy by emitting flexible and unique message's to one's partner. Research into this realm indicates that relational messages move relationships to deeper levels through the communication of several different themes (i.e., *depth, similarity, arousal, composure, and intimacy*).

Further evidence is found in studies conducted on relationship descriptions and interpersonal valence, the factors that contribute to the development and sustainability of relationships. In one interesting empirical study cited by Burgoon and Hale (1984), participants were asked to rate 30 statements related to communication with a specific individual (e.g., acquaintance, co-worker, friend, spouse) (Knapp, Ellis, & Williams as cited by Burgoon & Hale). Three dimensions (i.e., personalized communication, synchronized communication, difficult communication) were found using factor analysis and differentiated the levels of closeness within a relationship. These dimensions closely corresponded to the relational themes of *affection, inclusion, similarity, composure, formality, and arousal*. Research into relationship description, maintenance, and sustainability provides further evidence that there are many different themes that can arise in relational communication.

*Social interaction.* Social interaction represents the final line of research used to support Burgoon and Hale's (1984) 12 relational themes. Social interaction research is applicable to relational communication work because it almost exclusively focuses on face-to-face interactions. Most research in this domain looks for recurring communication themes that are apparent in verbal and nonverbal behavior. Most of the research that Burgoon and Hale reviewed involves observer's assessments of common communication themes that are then factor analyzed to produce several dimensions. Support for all 12 relational themes is found within social interaction research.

Burgoon and Hale first reviewed Mehrabian and Ksionsky's work on different categories of social work. Mehrabian and Ksionsky indicated that nonverbal behavior can fall into three distinct categories: power, immediacy, and responsiveness. The power theme is directly relatable to the *dominance-submission* relational theme. Immediacy, similar to the Burgoon and Hale themes of *affection-hostility*, *inclusion-exclusion*, and *intensity of involvement*, represents the degree to which a person nonverbally conveys liking or disliking to another person. The third category, responsiveness, is likened to the Burgoon and Hale theme of *arousal* in that it is how we nonverbally convey emotional responsiveness to another in conversation. Mehrabian and Ksionsky later evaluated 26 observed behaviors that collapsed into a six factor structure. According to Burgoon and Hale, this evaluation provided further support for the multidimensional nature of communication. Similarly, other works on small group communication and dyadic interaction indicate that communicative behaviors were best represented by a multitude of factors instead of just one or two basic

themes. Research into social interactions among groups and dyads provide further support for the 12 relational themes mentioned by Burgoon and Hale.

In sum, Burgoon and Hale (1984) conducted an extensive review of a diverse body literature pertaining to anthropology, psychotherapy, personality theories, semantic meaning, source credibility, self-presentation, relationship development, nonverbal behavior, dyadic and group interactions, and interpersonal behavior to support the multidimensionality of relational communication. Specifically, Burgoon and Hale derived evidence for 12 dimensions of relational communication including: *dominance-submission*, *intimacy* (which encompasses the dimensions of *affection-hostility*, *interest-disinterest*, *inclusion-exclusion*, *trust-distrust*, and *depth-superficiality*), *emotional arousal*, *composure*, *similarity*, *formality*, and *task-social orientation*. By considering the 12 themes that exist with communication episodes, a deeper understanding of relational communication patterns can be achieved. In particular, researchers can better understand the different ways in which people produce and interpret meaning when interacting with others. Burgoon and Hale stated that a fundamental next step in this process was to empirically verify the existence of the 12 dimensions in relational communication.

#### *Development of the Relational Communication Scale*

In order to validate the 12 themes of relational communication, Burgoon and Hale (1987) created the Relational Communication Scale (RCS). The RCS represents the 12 separate themes that were originally described by Burgoon and Hale (1984). The RCS was tested in a series of measurement studies to support its use as a reliable and valid

measurement of relational communication themes. The results of the original studies are discussed below.

*Study 1.* Items on the RCS were derived from examining other communication skills, investigating literature pertaining to RCS themes, and questioning relational communication researchers. The original RCS was made up of 32 positively and negatively worded items that were rated on a one (strongly agree) to seven (strongly disagree) Likert scale. Both a participant and observer form were created. Initially, the RCS was tested with undergraduate psychology students who engaged in dyadic interactions with a confederate. The confederate was asked to vary his or her nonverbal immediacy behavior (e.g., leaning forward, maintaining eye contact) in order to convey interest, disinterest, or neutrality in the conversation. The RCS was used by both observers and participants to see if distinct relational themes emerged and whether the RCS could adequately distinguish between the different immediacy conditions.

Burgoon and Hale (1987) used principal components oblique solution analysis to analyze participant's ratings. Results revealed eight factors that accounted for 58% of the variance in ratings. The majority of the twelve themes were represented in the eight independent factors of: (a) similarity/receptivity/inclusion, (b) dominance, (c) task/social orientation, (d) nonimmediacy (distance), (e) honesty, (f) intimacy (i.e., depth, affection, trust, inclusion), (g) arousal/intensity of involvement, and (h) formality. Although all of the themes originally identified by Burgoon and Hale (1984) were at least somewhat represented, *composure* failed to emerge as a separate factor. Additionally, *honesty* emerged as a separate factor composed of only one item. Although hypothesized to be related to involvement and

intimacy, nonimmediacy also emerged as a separate factor that was concerned with the emotional distance between dyads in conversation. In order to identify the minimum number of items needed to represent all relational themes, Burgoon and Hale performed a second round of orthogonal factor analysis in which items and factors were subjected to stricter criteria for selection. The best factor solution retained 20 of the original 32 items and produced four dimensions: intimacy, involvement/arousal/inclusion, dominance, and nonimmediacy. Results also showed that a different pattern of themes emerged as respondents were told to vary their nonverbal behavior (i.e., act more involved, act less involved, act neutral).

This initial measurement study produced empirical support for the idea that relational communication was composed of many themes. Additionally, many of the dimensions that were originally purposed by Burgoon and Hale (1984) were represented in the various factors that emerged. At the same time, Burgoon and Hale (1987) suggested that the initial study of the RCS had several limitations including the failure of certain themes to emerge as distinct factors, which may have been attributable to the scale items being too few. Retrospective qualitative analysis of questions also suggested an imbalance between positively and negatively worded items. Therefore, a second study of the RCS was conducted to better understand the dimensions of relational communication and to test the RCS with a new sample.

*Study 2.* The second study involved undergraduates who were asked to recall an at least dyadic conversation that lasted at least 15 minutes. Respondents were then asked to rate the interaction using a modified version of the RCS. The RCS used in this study consisted of

68 positively and negatively worded items (all 32 of the original items were retained). The item number was expanded to adequately represent each of the relational themes.

Results from a principal components analysis revealed that there were nine primary factors in the modified RCS: (a) receptivity/inclusion/trust, (b) persuasion/ingratiation (c) dominance/similarity, (d) arousal/involvement, (e) task/social orientation, (f) formality, (g) nonimmediacy (i.e., distance) (h) composure, (i) intimacy (i.e., affection, depth, inclusion, trust). Interestingly, these results suggested that the originally proposed dominance dimension is composed of two factors. *Persuasion/ingratiation* is seen as more socially acceptable ways to influence another as opposed to the *dominance/similarity* dimension, which was more focused on overt control and dissimilarity among individuals in conversation. Within this study, *composure* also emerged as a separate factor representing comfort, relaxation, and poise in the dyadic interaction. Burgoon and Hale (1987) again performed a second round of orthogonal factor analysis in which items and factors were subjected to stricter criteria for selection. The best factor solution retained 28 of the original 68 items and produced 4 primary dimensions: arousal/composure/formality/task orientation, intimacy/similarity, nonimmediacy, and dominance.

The results from the second study demonstrated that most of the relational themes proposed by Burgoon and Hale (1984) were stable across different subjects. A third study was conducted to improve the reliability of the scales, refine the wording, and limit the number of items to make the scale more practical. In addition, a third study enhanced the predictive validity of the RCS.

*Study 3.* In this study, the RCS was shortened to include 60 items. Those items that failed to consistently load on any factor were eliminated. Additionally, items within the arousal domain were added to reflect more positive forms of arousal. The scale was tested with 145 undergraduates who engaged in conversations with a confederate who was instructed to modify his or her gaze (e.g., maintain eye contact, frequently look away).

Results indicated a 10-factor solution that accounted for 57% of the variance. Essentially the factors represent the same structure as those in the previous two studies. Additionally, an *equality* factor emerged that represented the degree to which a participant felt that the confederate perceived him or her as equals. The primary goal of this third study was to reduce the number of items. So, after an examination of results, the 60 items were reduced to 26 items. Items that did not significantly load on one or more components or that loaded similarly on two or more factors were dropped. This new 26-item scale was also subjected to orthogonal factor analysis which produced a seven factor solution that had good psychometric properties. The seven distinct dimensions that emerged were: (a) similarity/depth, (b) receptivity/trust, (c) immediacy/affection, (d) dominance, (e) equality, (f) composure, and (g) formality. The authors noted that for future measurement purposes, some additions to the current set could be warranted based on the earlier studies. Burgoon and Hale (1987) recommended using these eight dimensions: (a) immediacy/affection, (b) similarity/depth, (c) receptivity/trust, (d) composure, (e) formality, (f) dominance, (g) equality, and (h) task orientation.

*Usage of the RCS.* Over the past two decades, the RCS has been used in many studies of relational communication in dyadic interactions including those involving patient-

physician interaction, marital satisfaction, computer-mediated interaction, and relational development. A description of these studies is provided in Table A in Appendix A. Additionally, Hale, Burgoon, and Householder (2005) suggested that although RCS has been most extensively applied to studies of nonverbal behavior, it can and has also been applied to other contexts strictly involving verbal behavior. The RCS tends to also be flexible and versatile, able to be adapted in wording to be used as a participant observer measure, a non-participant observer measure, or a self-report measure. Additionally, the number of items and scales used has varied from study to study showing that the RCS can be flexibly applied to measure the relational dimensions of most concern (Hale et al.). Taken together, the RCS is a reliable and valid way to measure the various themes of relational communication.

*RCS and consultation.* To date, no consultation studies have used the RCS to understand the different relational dimensions that arise in consultant-consultee interactions. As already mentioned, most studies of relational communication in consultation have almost exclusively focused on the control dimension. By narrowly focusing on the control dimension, researchers may be neglecting other important relational themes that characterize the consultant-consultee relationship. Use of the RCS within consultation research could serve as an important first step in understanding additional relational themes that exist within consultation. Additionally, the RCS is a flexible and adaptable rating scale that may prove to be less labor intensive than some of the more frequently used verbal coding systems (e.g., RCCCS). Thus, use of the RCS could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the

nature of consultant-consultee interactions and be more practical for use within consultation research.

#### Interpersonal Themes Studied within Consultation Studies

Although the RCS has not been directly applied to school consultation research, several interpersonal themes similar to those included on the RCS have been studied in the context of school consultation. In particular, Knoff, McKenna, and Riser (1991) were interested in defining the characteristics and skills of effective school consultants. They noted that although most researchers have suggested that certain interpersonal variables such as empathy or genuineness are helpful in facilitating the consultation process and ensuring positive outcomes, these variables have never been empirically examined within the school consultation literature. In order to bridge this gap, Knoff et al. created a survey instrument called the Consultant Effectiveness Scale (CES) that could be used to evaluate the characteristics of an effective consultant. Items on the scale were determined conducting standardized interviews with school consultants and extensively reviewing the literature. The resulting instrument was then reviewed by school psychology trainers (i.e., experts) and practitioners from around the country. Factor analysis was performed to identify the common factors among the survey items.

Results of the initial Knoff et al. (1991) survey supported a five-factor solution for both the practitioner and expert sample. The five factors for the practitioner sample were labeled: Factor 1: Consultation Process Skills, Factor II: Expert Skills, Factor III: Personal Characteristics, Factor IV: Interpersonal Skills, and Factor V: Professional Respect. The five factor solution for the expert sample was essentially the same with some items loading on

different factors and Factor V being called Consultant Directiveness. Relevant to the RCS were specific items that addressed variables similar to the relational themes identified by Burgoon and Hale (1984). The Interpersonal Skills Factor contained several items that directly related to relationship building such as expressing affection, pleasantness, warmth, and empathy. These interpersonal variables that were identified as important for a consultant to exhibit are similar to many of the intimacy relational themes such as receptivity, trust, inclusion, and affection. Additionally, other consultant effectiveness items such as attentiveness, active listening, conveying interest, and making eye contact can all be seen as relevant to the involvement theme.

The initial study conducted by Knoff et al. (1991) was intended to be exploratory in nature and was primarily concerned with scale development. Two later studies conducted by the same research group looked more closely at teacher's and school psychologist's ratings of what particular characteristics were most important for a consultant to be effective (Knoff, Hines, & Kromrey, 1995; Knoff, Sullivan, & Liu, 1995). In the first, Knoff, Sullivan, and Liu examined teacher perceptions of effective consultants using the CES. Among the top ten highest rated items were trustworthiness and attentiveness. These characteristics can be seen as synonymous with the relational domains of trust and involvement. Other highly rated items included being pleasant, warm, and displaying interest, which are similar to the relational dimensions of affection, inclusion, and involvement, respectively. These results were combined with a later survey of school psychologists (Knoff, Hines, & Kromrey) to develop a fuller understanding of effective consultant characteristics. Items that tended to be consistently rated high among the two samples were those that were similar to the broad

intimacy relational theme, and included items related to trustworthiness and approachability, and being pleasant.

In sum, although the RCS has never been applied to school consultation, research on interpersonal skills that are needed to be an effective consultant suggests that relational themes could be important to a consultant's success in consultation. Studies on the CES suggest that consultants need to be trustworthy, empathetic, attentive, and actively involved to be effective. Effective communication with a consultee is a way to display those personal characteristics. Studying commonly occurring relational themes within consultation can aid in understanding the degree to which consultants are conveying ideas such as involvement, inclusion, affection and/or trust.

#### Statement of the Problem

School-based consultation is an indirect mode of psychological service delivery where a consultant (e.g., school psychologist) engages in a series of face-to-face interactions with a consultee (e.g., teacher) to address a work-related problem that involves a particular client (e.g., student) or group of clients. Research on the efficacy of school-based consultation has demonstrated positive outcomes for both clients and consultees (Medway & Updyke, 1985; Sheridan et al., 1996). Along with a desire to understand outcomes or "if" consultation works, there has also been a desire to understand the process of consultation, or "how" it works. Research on the process of consultation has led to several conceptualizations about the nature of consultation. Although some researchers have conceptualized consultation as a "collaborative" relationship whereby the consultant and the consultee work jointly to solve the problem, others have conceptualized consultation as an

interpersonal influence process whereby the consultant guides the consultee through the problem-solving process (Erchul & Martens, 2002; Gutkin, 1999a).

Erchul and colleagues have taken the position that consultation is a “social influence process” whereby a consultant uses specific strategies to persuade a consultee to change his or her current attitudes, beliefs, and/or behaviors (Erchul & Martens, 2002). Research in the social influence domain has focused on the various processes that are used to exert interpersonal influence within the consultation relationship. Two important perspectives within this domain are the social power bases and relational communication (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008).

The focus of this research, the relational communication perspective, emphasizes that people define their relationships with others through interpersonal transactions. Emphasis is placed on the interactional nature of the message exchange process as opposed to simple message content (Hale et al., 2005; Millar & Rogers, 1976). Relational communication researchers have postulated that several different themes are evident in interpersonal communication. Burgoon and Hale (1984, 1987), for example, concluded that relational communication is best understood as varying along 12 separate yet interdependent themes: (a) dominance-submission; (b) emotional arousal; (c) composure-noncomposure; (d) similarity-dissimilarity; (e) formality-informality; (f) task-orientation-social-orientation; (g) intimacy; and the subcomponents of intimacy, including (h) depth, (i) affection, (j) inclusion-exclusion, (k) trust, and (l) intensity of involvement.

Relational communication researchers have strived to develop ways to quantify the construct of relational communication. For example, Rogers and Farace (1975) developed

the relational control communication coding system (RCCCS), which examines paired message sequences as a means of understanding interactions between individuals. Within this system, emphasis is placed upon understanding the interpersonal transactions by assigning three-digit codes to individual messages. These codes can then be utilized to make inferences about relational control in conversations. A second way to understand relational communication patterns between individuals has been through the use of rating scales. The Relational Communication Scale (RCS), developed by Burgoon and Hale (1987), has been used to assess multiple relational communicative themes that are important to understanding interpersonal interactions. Whereas the RCCCS examines individual messages, the RCS looks at entire conversations between individuals in order to understand interpersonal interactions. Despite their methodological differences, these two measures are both reliable and valid ways to examine relational communication themes.

Although several different themes have been described and evaluated psychometrically by researchers, the control dimension (i.e., dominance-submission) has received the most attention within relational communication studies. In fact, within school-based behavioral consultation studies, relational communication analysis has almost exclusively focused on issues of control. The narrow focus on issues relating to “control” within behavioral consultation has likely led to a lack of consideration of other important relational themes that may exist within consultation (e.g., trust, affection, depth). Therefore, research on other relational themes within school consultation may further the understanding of the process of consultation.

The research questions (RQs) and hypotheses (Hs) of the current research study are as follows:

RQ1: Besides dominance-submission, what other relational dimensions as measured by the RCS are likely to characterize a consultant's interactions with a consultee?

RQ2: What other RCS relational dimensions characterize a consultant scoring high on RCCCS dominance and a consultant scoring lower on RCCCS dominance?

*Rationale: The RCCCS has identified a particular consultant as high on dominance and, for the purpose of assessing concurrent validity, this consultant will also be rated as high on the RCS dominance dimension when compared to the consultant rated lower on RCCCS dominance.*

RQ3: What other RCS relational dimensions characterize a consultee scoring high on RCCCS dominance and a consultee scoring lower on RCCCS dominance?

*Rationale: The RCCCS has identified a particular consultee as high on dominance and, for the purpose of assessing concurrent validity, this consultee will also be rated as high on the RCS dominance dimension when compared to the consultee rated lower on RCCCS dominance.*

H1: When compared to a consultant scoring low on RCCCS dominance, a consultant scoring higher on RCCCS dominance will be rated higher by naive observers on the RCS dominance dimension.

H2: When compared to a consultee scoring low on RCCCS dominance, a consultee scoring higher on RCCCS dominance will be rated higher by naive observers on the RCS dominance dimension.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants consisted of 70 North Carolina State University undergraduate students who were enrolled in the Introductory Psychology course during the Fall of 2007. To meet course requirements, students can elect to participate in a total of three hours of research for a total of six credits. For this experiment, students were required to participate for one hour and received two credits upon completion. Demographic characteristics for the participants are listed in Table 2. The racial/ethnic diversity of the sample was comparable to North Carolina State University's undergraduate population (University Planning & Analysis, 2007).

### *Stimulus Materials*

*Interview selection.* The two interviews that were used as stimulus materials in the current research study were used by Erchul, DuPaul, et al. (2007), and are representative of the Problem Identification Interview (PII) found in behavioral consultation (Bergan, 1977). There were two major criteria for selection: (a) dominance scores on the RCCCS and (b) same gendered consultant (school psychologist)/teacher interaction. First, interviews were chosen based on participants' dominance scores, previously determined through verbal coding on the RCCCS (see Erchul, DuPaul, et al. for a full description of coding procedures). Dominance is operationally defined as the proportion of a speaker's one-up messages that are responded to by one-down messages by the other speaker. Therefore, it is calculated as a proportion of the total number of one-up messages by speaker A directly followed by one-down messages by speaker B. Dominance scores can range from 0 to 1, with lower numbers

Table 2

*Demographics for the RCS Sample (N=70)*

Characteristic	
Gender (female)	64.3%
Ethnicity/Race	
Hispanic/Latino	2.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.4%
Caucasian	68.6%
African American	18.6%
Other or Unknown	2.9%
School Year <sup>a</sup>	
Freshman	60%
Sophomore	22.9%
Junior	10%
Senior	5.7%
Age <sup>a</sup>	
Range	17-23 years
<i>M (SD)</i>	18.58 (1.22)

<sup>a</sup> Missing data from one participant

indicating lower dominance. Both interviews were chosen from a total of 42 possible interviews based on consultant (i.e., school psychologist) dominance scores and were selected to represent one consultant with relatively high dominance and one with relatively low dominance. Second, the interviews had to meet the criteria of having the same gendered consultant and consultee to limit the possibility of gender effects.

The interview that was chosen to represent the high dominance consultant had a dominance score of .97. This was the second highest consultant dominance score of the 42 interviews coded by Erchul, DuPaul, et al. (2007). The highest consultant dominance interview, involving a consultant with a dominance score of 1.0, was not used due to a gender mismatch (i.e., male consultant, female teacher). The teacher who participated in the interview selected for this study received a dominance rating of .60, which was the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest of the interviews coded by Erchul, DuPaul, et al. Therefore, this interview is considered to be representative of a consultee with relatively low dominance. The interview chosen to represent a consultant with a relatively low dominance consisted of a consultant with a dominance score of .52. This was the lowest dominance score of the 42 interviews coded by Erchul, DuPaul, et al. The corresponding teacher dominance score was .84, which was the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest of the 42 interviews coded by Erchul, DuPaul, et al. Therefore, this interview was considered to be representative of a teacher exhibiting relatively low dominance.

Interview samples of approximately 15 minutes each were used to ensure that participants would be able to rate two interviews within the hour time-limit. Interviews were checked to ensure that they started at approximately the same part of the PII (i.e., specifying the problem) and ended at the same part (i.e., prior to setting the next interview date).

Dominance scores were recalculated for the portion of the interview that were used. In the *consultant high dominance* interview, the consultant received a dominance score of 1.0 (compared to .97 in the sample used in Erchul, DuPaul, et al., 2007), and the teacher received a dominance score of 0 (compared to .60). In the *consultant low dominance* condition, the consultant received a dominance score of .42 (compared to .52) and the teacher received a dominance score of .82 (compared to .84).

*RCS*. The Relational Communication Scale (RCS) is a rating scale designed to measure the 12 distinct but interrelated dimensions of relational communication, including: (a) dominance-submission; (b) emotional arousal; (c) composure-non-composure; (d) similarity-dissimilarity; (e) formality-informality; (f) task orientation-social orientation; (g) intimacy and the subcomponents of intimacy, including (h) depth, (i) affection, (j) inclusion-exclusion, (k) trust, and (l) intensity of involvement. The RCS was developed through a process of factor analysis (described earlier). Several different versions of the RCS have been created and used in various communication research studies over the years. A recent version of the RCS (Hale et al., 2005) consists of five broad scales (i.e., global intimacy-nonintimacy, which contains the subscales of involvement-noninvolvement, affection-hostility, depth-superficiality, trust-distrust, and similarity-dissimilarity; dominance-submission; composure-arousal; formality-informality; and task orientation-social orientation). This structure creates a total of 10 scales on the current 72-item version. All RCS items are Likert items that are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The RCS has the flexibility to assess relational themes from multiple perspectives, including participant observation, self-report, and observer ratings. Modifications involve changing the

wording (e.g., “I dominated the conversation” to “she dominated the conversation”) (Hale et al.). For the current research study, the subjects of the various probes were changed to reflect ratings of the consultant or the teacher (e.g., “The consultant dominated to conversation” or “The teacher dominated the conversation”).

In an effort to obtain broad information on relational themes within consultation, this research utilized all of the scales on the RCS (see Appendix B) with the exception of the task orientation-social orientation due to low reliabilities (i.e., range .34-.42;  $M = .39$ ) and infrequent use in relational communication research (Hale et al., 2005). In addition, the affection scale was dropped from the current research study because of the perceived irrelevancy of items to school consultation (e.g., “he/she found me attractive”). Because the affection scale was dropped, the intimacy scale was also not used because it is a composite of several scales, including the intimacy scale (see Appendix C for the RCS used in the current study). Reliabilities of the most commonly used subscales have varied across studies, but means suggest moderate to good internal consistency. Coefficient alpha data are as follows: global intimacy/similarity (range .70-.99,  $M = .82$ ); involvement/affection (.46-.97,  $M = .79$ ); similarity/inclusion/depth (.58-.95,  $M = .77$ ); receptivity/trust (.44-.97,  $M = .79$ ); similarity/trust/equality (.74-.77,  $M = .77$ ); immediacy (.76-.86,  $M = .82$ ); affection (.78-.85,  $M = .81$ ); dominance (.52-.88,  $M = .70$ ); composure/arousal (.78-.89,  $M = .89$ ); formality (.63-.92,  $M = .85$ ) (Hale et al.).

Additionally, some validity information for the RCS has been reported. Most validity information comes from research that has studied how relational themes vary due to different displays of verbal and nonverbal behavior. For example, in one study by Burgoon and Hale

(1988), confederates were asked to convey nonverbal behavior indicative of being highly involved in a conversation, noninvolved in a conversation, or neutral in terms of involvement. Results of this study showed that those who acted highly involved were rated higher on the involvement, trust, and intimacy dimensions of relational communication. Additionally, other studies (reported in Appendix A) have used the RCS as manipulation checks for confederate nonverbal behavior (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993). Taken together, these results suggest that the RCS has good predictive and construct validity properties.

*Demographic information sheet.* Demographic information was also collected. Participants completed a demographic information sheet that asked for information regarding gender, ethnicity, age, and grade (see Appendix D).

#### *Procedure*

*Design.* Participants were recruited through the Psychology Department's website that has been designated for the purpose of recruiting undergraduate students for faculty and graduate student research (i.e., Experimentrix). Participants completed the study in groups and approximately 10-16 participants were in each group and a total of 6 groups were used. Upon arriving, participants were assigned a randomly generated participant identification number. To begin, the experimenter read a standardized set of directions to participants that described the nature of a problem identification interview between a consultant and a consultee. They were also told that they would complete a rating form on each of the speakers following each interview. The experimenter then passed out the interview transcript (initially face down) and participants were encouraged to follow along with the audio CD. The experimenter then played either the *high consultant dominance* CD or the *low consultant*

*dominance* CD. The order of the presentation of the interviews (i.e., consultant with high dominance or consultant with low dominance) was alternated by session to counterbalance for order effects. Following stimulus presentation, participants were asked to rate either the consultant or teacher using the RCS. The order of consultant/teacher ratings was alternated across sessions to also counterbalance for possible order effects. After participants rated the consultant or teacher, they were then instructed to use a second RCS to rate the other interview participant. The procedure was then repeated for the second interview. Following completion of the fourth RCS, participants were asked to fill out the demographic questionnaire. Afterward, participants were then told that they were free to leave.

*Pilot study.* In order to assess the feasibility of these procedures, a pilot study was conducted using 14 participants, (*Note:* the data from the pilot study were not included in the main study data analysis). In addition to participating in the study using the above mentioned procedures, participants were also asked to complete a questionnaire that assessed the ease/difficulty of the task and to suggest any procedural changes. A qualitative review of the results from that questionnaire revealed that most participants found the task easy to complete. One participant remarked that it was "...a bit difficult because it was quite redundant." Additionally, most participants stated that the procedures were fine as is, with one person commenting that the task could be shortened. Based on the results from the pilot study, it was determined that the same initial procedures could be used for the main study.

*Data collection.* All data were collected, entered, and checked by the experimenter. The data were then entered into Excel spreadsheets. Data analysis was conducted via SPSS computer software. Prior to conducting the study, it was determined that any questionnaire

in which five or more items were left blank would be discarded. Although missing data were minimal, if an item point was left blank the means for the various subscales were derived by adding each item score in that subscale and dividing by the total number to which a participant responded.

## Results

### *General*

In order to better understand differences in relational dimensions as a function of status (i.e., teacher or consultant) and RCCCS dominance scores (i.e., high or low dominance), means and standard deviations were calculated for high dominance consultants, low dominance consultants, high dominance consultees, and low dominance consultees. These results are presented in Table 3.

Additionally, although the RCS has been used in multiple studies of communication, this study represents the first to incorporate the RCS into consultation research. For this reason, a correlation matrix was obtained for the various subscales. This matrix is presented in Table 4. Results indicate that many of the scales on the RCS are significantly and highly correlated, with absolute values of all but four correlations ranging from .12 to .71.

### *Internal Consistency*

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the seven dimensions and these alphas are presented in Table 5. In general, internal consistency for the RCS in the current study is consistent with previous studies (i.e., .70-.91,  $M = .82$ ).

### *Research Question 1*

Recall that Research Question 1 pertains to relational dimensions that characterize a consultant's interactions with a consultee. Analyses related to this question were primarily descriptive in nature. Means and standard deviations were obtained for each of the relational domains regardless of consultant dominance scores and are presented in Table 6. The

Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations for the RCS Relational Dimensions by Status and RCCCS*

*Dominance<sup>a</sup>*

RCS Dimension	High Consultant <sup>b</sup>	Low Consultant <sup>c</sup>	High Teacher <sup>d</sup>	Low Teacher <sup>e</sup>
Involvement	4.74 (1.05)	4.80 (1.07)	4.70 (1.18)	3.75 (1.24)
Trust	4.99 (.82)	5.08 (.80)	4.24 (1.00)	4.39 (.78)
Depth	4.00 (.99)	4.19 (.78)	3.69 (1.02)	3.27 (.98)
Similarity	4.30 (.91)	4.61 (.92)	3.77 (1.10)	4.11 (.87)
Dominance	4.31 (.76)	3.64 (.81)	4.84 (.88)	3.38 (.87)
Composure	5.04 (.85)	4.82 (.93)	4.54 (1.03)	4.07 (.96)
Formal	4.32 (.92)	4.24 (.80)	4.17 (1.08)	3.97 (.87)

*N* = 70

<sup>a</sup>All RCS items are Likert items that are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

<sup>b</sup>High Consultant = High Dominance Consultant, <sup>c</sup>Low Consultant = Low Dominance

Consultant, <sup>d</sup>High Teacher = High Dominance Consultant, <sup>e</sup>Low Teacher = Low Dominance

Consultant

relational themes that characterized a consultant's interactions with a consultee (ordered from most to least characteristic) were: trust, composure, similarity, involvement, similarity, formality, depth, and dominance. It should be noted that due to the descriptive nature of the

Table 4

*Intercorrelations between Various Subscales on the RCS*

	Involve <sup>a</sup>	Trust	Depth	Similar <sup>b</sup>	Dom <sup>c</sup>	Compose <sup>d</sup>	Formal <sup>e</sup>
Involvement	—	.62**	.71**	.54**	.43**	.66**	-.12*
Trust		—	.65**	.69**	-.02	.56**	-.09
Depth			—	.64**	.30**	.59**	-.27**
Similarity				—	-.13*	.53**	-.30**
Dominance					—	.30**	.08
Composure						—	-.04
Formality							—

*N* = 280

<sup>a</sup>Involvement, <sup>b</sup>Similarity, <sup>c</sup>Dominance, <sup>d</sup>Composure, <sup>e</sup>Formality

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01

analyses, it cannot be determined whether the various dimensions are significantly different from one another.

*Research Question 2 and 3*

Research Questions 2 and 3 are more specific in nature. These two questions look for differences between high and low dominance consultants (Research Question 2) and high and low dominance consultees (Research Question 3). To examine these differences, seven 2 X 2 repeated measures ANOVAs using both status (i.e., teacher or consultant) and dominance (i.e., high or low dominance as rated by the RCCCS) as the within-subjects

Table 5

*Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for RCS Dimensions*

Dimension	Alpha
Involvement	.89
Trust	.82
Depth	.82
Similarity	.77
Dominance	.91
Composure	.82
Formality	.70

---

*N* = 70

variables were performed. The results of those ANOVAs for each relational dimension are listed below.

*Involvement.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 15.48, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .18$ ) and dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 16.91, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .20$ ), and there was a significant status X dominance effect ( $F(1, 69) = 18.03, p = .001, \eta^2 = .14$ ). Thus, differences in ratings of involvement depended on whether a participant was rating a teacher or a consultant, with consultants ( $M = 4.77$ ) being rated higher than teachers ( $M = 4.23$ ). Likewise, differences in ratings of involvement depended on whether a speaker was considered high or low dominance on the RCCCS, with higher dominance ( $M = 4.73$ ) being rated as having more involvement than lower dominance ( $M = 4.28$ ). The status X

Table 6

*Consultant Means and Standard Deviations for Various Dimensions*

Dimension	<i>M (SD)</i>
Trust	5.04 (.81)
Compose	4.93 (.90)
Involve	4.78 (1.06)
Similarity	4.45 (.92)
Formality	4.28 (.85)
Depth	4.10 (.89)
Dominance	3.98 (.84)

*N* = 70

dominance effect suggests that the teacher who was highly dominant ( $M = 4.80$ ) was perceived as having more involvement in the interview than the one who had lower dominance ( $M = 3.76$ ). In contrast, no differences existed between high and low dominance consultants on the relational dimension of involvement. These results are presented in Figure 1.

*Trust.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 39.91, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .37$ ), but not for dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 1.64, p = .21, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Additionally, there was not an interaction effect ( $F(1, 69) = .15, p = .70, \eta^2 = .002$ ). Thus, ratings of trust did depend upon whether a speaker was a teacher or a consultant, with consultants being rated as higher ( $M = 5.04$ ) than teachers ( $M = 4.32$ ), but ratings of trust did not depend on RCCCS

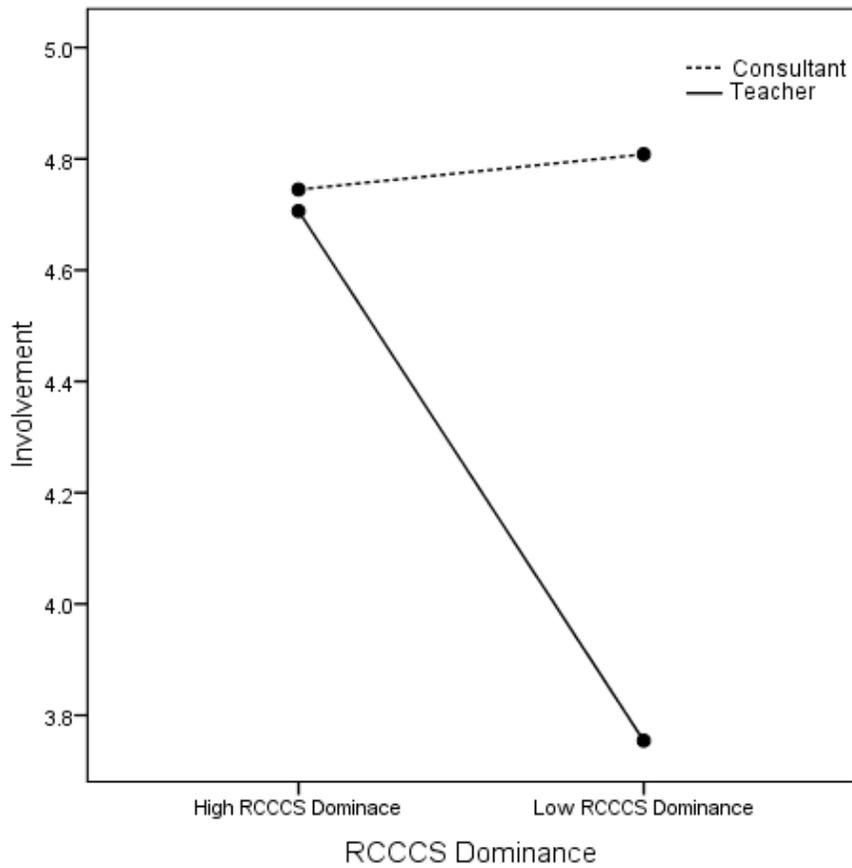


Figure 1. RCS involvement dimension scores for the high RCCCS dominance consultant, lower RCCCS dominance consultant, high RCCCS dominance teacher, and low RCCCS dominance teacher.

dominance. Also, differences did not exist between high/low dominance consultants and high/low dominance consultees.

*Depth.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 23.93, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .26$ ), but not for dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 1.71, p = .20, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Additionally, there was a significant status X dominance effect ( $F(1, 69) = 6.50, p = .01, \eta^2 = .09$ ). Thus, ratings of depth did depend upon whether the speaker was a teacher or a consultant, with consultants being rated as higher on depth ( $M = 4.10$ ) than teachers ( $M = 3.50$ ), but ratings of depth did not depend on RCCCS dominance. The status X dominance effect suggests that the teacher who was highly dominant ( $M = 3.69$ ) was perceived by participants as having more depth in the interview than the one who had lower dominance ( $M = 3.27$ ). In contrast, no differences existed between high and low dominance consultants on the relational dimension of depth. These results are presented in Figure 2.

*Similarity.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 17.86, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .21$ ) and dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 10.76, p = .002, \eta^2 = .14$ ). However, there was no interaction effect ( $F(1, 69) = .02, p = .90, \eta^2 = .00$ ). Thus, differences in ratings of similarity depended on whether a participant was rating a teacher or a consultant, with consultants ( $M = 4.45$ ) being rated higher on the similarity dimension than teachers ( $M = 3.94$ ). Likewise, differences in ratings of similarity depended on whether a speaker was considered high or low dominance on the RCCCS, with lower dominance speakers ( $M = 4.36$ ) being rated as having more similarity than higher dominance speakers ( $M = 4.03$ ). Also, differences did not exist between high/low dominance consultants and high/low dominance consultees.

*Composure.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 36.36, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .35$ ) and dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 18.07, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .21$ ). However, there was

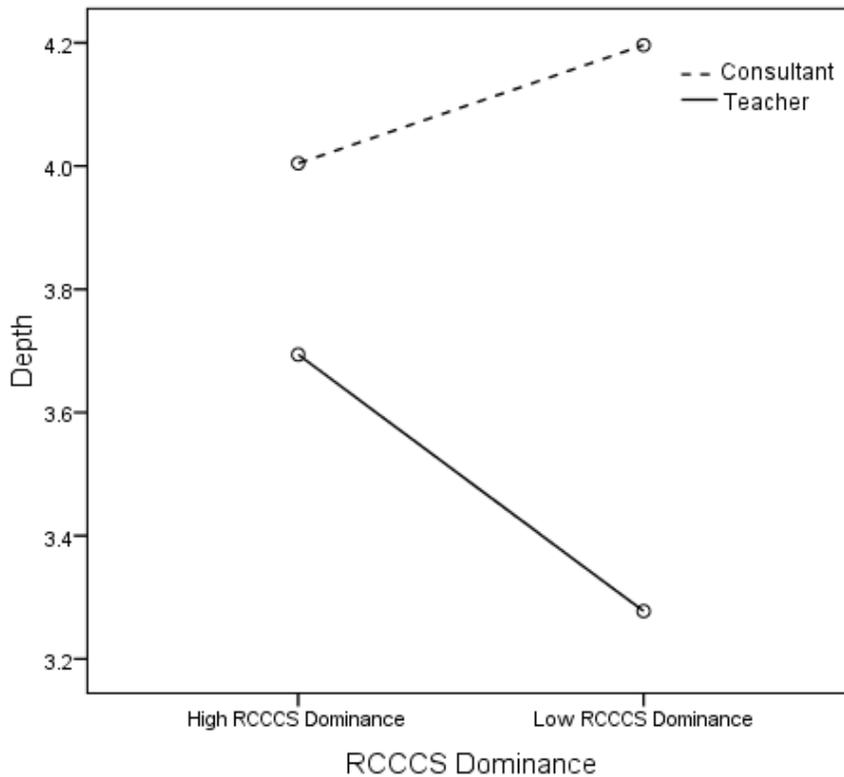


Figure 2. RCS depth dimension scores for the high RCCCS dominance consultant, lower RCCCS dominance consultant, high RCCCS dominance teacher, and lower RCCCS dominance teacher.

no interaction effect ( $F(1, 69) = 1.05, p = .31, \eta^2 = .02$ ). Thus, differences in ratings of composure depended on whether participants were rating a teacher or a consultant, with consultants ( $M = 4.93$ ) being rated higher on the composure dimension than teachers ( $M = 4.30$ ). Likewise, differences in ratings of composure depended on whether a speaker was

considered high or low dominance on the RCCCS with higher dominance ( $M = 4.79$ ) being rated as having more composure than lower dominance ( $M = 4.44$ ). Also, differences did not exist between high/low dominance consultants and high/low dominance consultees.

*Formality.* There was a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 4.54, p = .04, \eta^2 = .06$ ), but not for dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 2.60, p = .11, \eta^2 = .04$ ). Additionally, there was not an interaction effect ( $F(1, 69) = .27, p = .61, \eta^2 = .004$ ). Thus, ratings of formality did depend upon whether the speaker was a teacher or a consultant, with consultants being rated as higher on formality ( $M = 4.28$ ) than teachers ( $M = 4.07$ ), but ratings of composure did not depend on dominance. Also, differences did not exist between high/low dominance consultants and high/low dominance consultees.

#### *Hypotheses 1 and 2*

Hypotheses 1 and 2 relate to issues surrounding concurrent validity. Specifically, these hypotheses state that a consultant (Hypothesis 1) or consultee (Hypothesis 2) identified as having high dominance on the RCCCS will be rated as higher on the RCS dimension of dominance-submission when compared to a consultant (Hypothesis 1) or consultee (Hypothesis 2) identified as having lower dominance on the RCCCS. Analyses of these hypotheses were conducted via examining results from the repeated measures ANOVA (specific to the dominance RCS dimension) performed to analyze Research Questions 2 and 3. There was a not a significant main effect for status ( $F(1, 69) = 1.07, p = .30, \eta^2 = .02$ ); however, there was a significant main effect for dominance ( $F(1, 69) = 68.24, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .50$ ), and there was also significant status X dominance effect ( $F(1, 69) = 38.06, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .37$ ). Thus, differences in ratings of RCS dominance depended on whether a speaker was

considered high or low dominance on the RCCCS, with higher dominance ( $M = 4.58$ ) being rated on the RCS as having more dominance than lower dominance ( $M = 3.50$ ). The status X dominance effect suggests that the teacher who was high on RCCCS dominance ( $M = 4.84$ ) was perceived as being more dominant on the RCS dominant scale than the one who was lower on RCCCS dominance ( $M = 3.35$ ). Similarly, the consultant who was high on RCCCS dominance ( $M = 4.31$ ) was perceived as being more dominant on the RCS dominant scale than the one who was lower on RCCCS dominance ( $M = 3.65$ ). These results are presented in Figure 3.

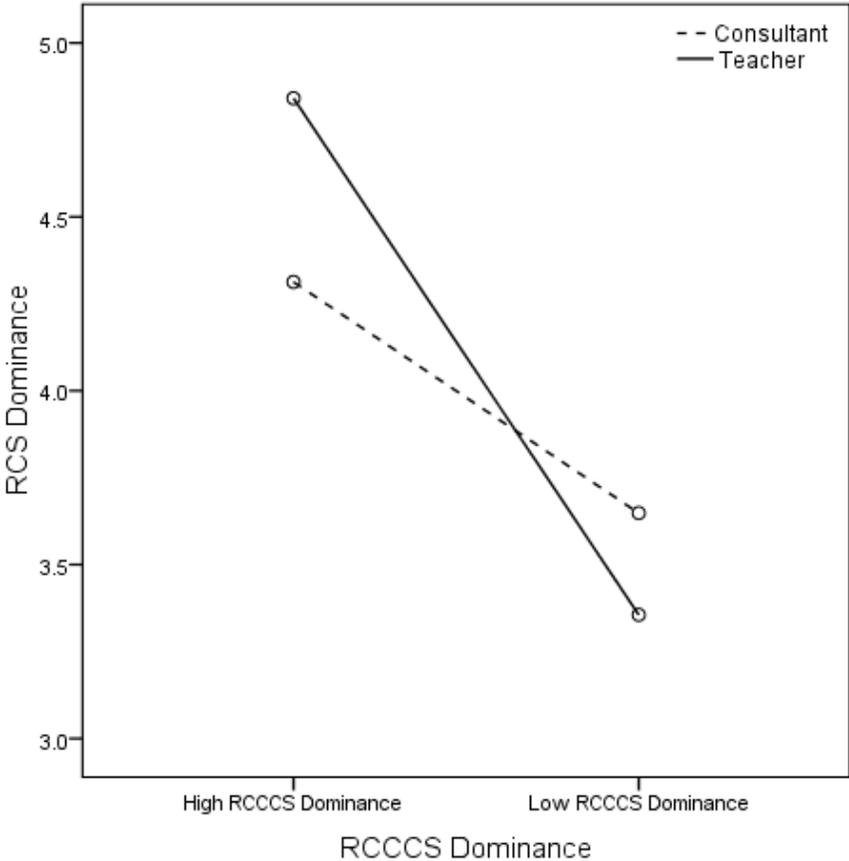


Figure 3. RCS dominance dimension scores for the high RCCCS dominance consultant, lower RCCCS dominance consultant, high RCCCS dominance teacher, and lower RCCCS dominance teacher.

## Discussion

This study focused on understanding the process of behavioral consultation from a relational communication perspective. A relational communication perspective emphasizes that within dyadic interactions (such as those that occur between a consultant and consultee), speakers are constantly redefining their roles, positions, and relationship through conversations. Although communication researchers have emphasized several relational themes that emerge in dyadic interactions (e.g., trust, similarity, depth; Burgoon & Hale, 1984; Millar & Rogers, 1976, 1987), relational communication consultation studies have almost exclusively focused on the theme of relational control (i.e., dominance-submission). This exclusionary focus on relational control has neglected other important relational themes that may characterize consultant-consultee interactions. The present study attempted to better understand these themes within consultant-consultee interactions utilizing the Relational Communication Scale (RCS; Burgoon & Hale, 1987).

The following discussion will begin by considering the findings as they relate to each of the three research questions and two hypotheses. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, other relevant results (e.g., main effects) will also be discussed. In addition, the discussion section will link current results to past research in consultation and relational communication. Finally, limitations and future directions will be presented.

### *Relational Dimensions that Characterize Consultation*

The exclusive focus on control within consultation verbal processes studies has led some researchers to ponder the true nature of consultation. In fact, research focusing exclusively on control, dominance, and domineeringness helped to spur the “collaboration

debate” (Erchul, 1999; Gutkin, 1999a, 1999b; Schulte & Osborne, 2003). With particular importance to Research Question 1 (i.e., what relational dimensions characterize a consultants interactions with a consultee) and in response to this debate, Erchul (1999) wrote:

Given what has apparently blossomed into a major issue for our field, I have often wondered if this debate would even exist today if communication researchers had advanced verbal interaction coding systems for dimensions of relational communication identified as trust, intimacy, inclusion-exclusion, and similarity...comparable to those they developed for control and dominance-submission in the 1970s (p. 191).

Utilizing the RCS within a consultation study represents a first step in exploring additional dimensions that may be of importance to the process of consultation.

With regard to Research Question 1, results showed that the top three highest-rated relational dimensions that characterize a consultant’s interactions with a consultee were trust, composure, and involvement. Although not a central focus or a priori hypothesis of this research study, results also indicated that these were the top three highest-rated dimensions for consultees. Taken together, these results suggest that these relational dimensions may be particularly important to the consultation process. These results are also in alignment with the interpersonal variables identified by Knoff and colleagues as important for a consultant to exhibit (Knoff, Hines, & Kromrey, 1995; Knoff, Sullivan, & Liu, 1995). Within these studies, school psychologists and teachers were asked to identify characteristics of an effective consultant. Among the top-ten rated items by both teachers and school psychologists was the interpersonal variable of trustworthiness, synonymous with the

relational dimension of trust. Similarly, other interpersonal variables such as attentiveness, interest, pleasantness, and approachability were also rated high by both school psychologists and teachers and are similar to the relational variables of composure and involvement. The congruence between the top-three relational dimensions (i.e., trust, involvement, and composure) among consultants and consultees and the importance of several similar variables identified by other researchers, suggests that these relational dimensions need to be examined more closely to fully understand their role in the process of consultation.

Similarity, formality, depth, and dominance also seemed to characterize a consultant's interactions with a consultee, although less so than trust, composure, and involvement. Interestingly, the lowest-rated relational dimension (although still relatively similar to the other relational dimensions) was dominance. Considering that: (a) several other relational dimensions were rated as more characteristic of a consultant's interactions with a consultee by naive observers than the relational dimension of dominance on the RCS and (b) dominance has emerged as an important consultation variable in other research (Erchul, 1987; Erchul, DuPaul et al., 2007), more studies are needed to examine the role of similarity, formality, and depth within the consultation process. Relational communication researchers have also noted the need to move beyond exclusively focusing on control. According to Rogers and Escudero (2004), "the investigation of the other dimensions is seen as an essential direction for the expansion of relational research" (p. 224). Given the results obtained, further investigations into other relational dimensions that exist within consultation, and possibly the link between these dimensions and outcomes, may help the field better understand the process of consultation.

*The Role of Involvement, Trust, Depth, Similarity, Composure, and Formality*

The relational dimensions of trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality were all rated by naïve observers as higher in consultants than teachers (regardless of dominance scores). In essence, naïve observers viewed consultants as: (a) more trustworthy than teachers; (b) better able to move the conversations to “deeper” levels when compared to teachers; (c) better able to signal demographic, attitudinal, and value similarity than teachers; (d) more relaxed and composed within the interaction when compared to teachers; and (e) better able to focus and keep the focus of the conversation of the task at hand than teachers. Two possible reasons related the nature of behavioral consultation and one reason pertaining to the design of Project PASS may account for these findings.

First, the nature of behavioral consultation may have led to some of the observed differences observed between consultants and teachers. The PII within behavioral consultation represents the initial formal interaction between a consultant and a teacher. During the PII, consultants are trying to specify and define the problem, understand the circumstances that surround the problem (e.g., classroom environment, antecedents, consequences), and develop goals for consultation with the teacher (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990). In short, the consultant has a series of objectives that need to be accomplished within the first interview. Thus, a consultant, unlike a teacher, tends to engage in a number of information-gathering strategies (e.g., questioning, clarifying, asking for elaboration or descriptions) during the first interview.

Second, during the PII, the consultant is probing into the consultee’s “work-life.” The consultant’s job during the first interview is to gather information on the events that

occur within the consultee's day, discuss the consultee's work problem, and explore the consultee's opinions pertaining to the classroom problem.

By virtue of the nature of behavioral consultation (i.e., the objectives that need to be met and probing into the consultee's work life), naïve observers may have viewed the consultants as being more involved, trustworthy, making an effort to being perceived as similar, and having more depth. Consultants may be perceived as being more involved because the consultant is the speaker doing the most probing (e.g., asking questions) during the first interview. Similarly, consultants may be perceived as having more depth than the teacher because the consultant is guiding and moving the conversation to a deeper level to meet the objectives of the PII. Because the consultant is asking questions and trying to better understand the teacher (as opposed to making suggestions, trying to solve the problem, or providing instructions to the teacher), consultants may be perceived as making more of an "effort" to be perceived as similar as opposed to teachers who are providing descriptions of the problem. Finally, the consultant may be perceived as more trustworthy than the teacher simply because the teacher is disclosing information about his/her work life as opposed to the consultant telling the teacher about his/her work life.

A third contributing explanation to the finding that consultants were higher on all the relational dimensions as measured by the RCS, resides in the specific design of Project PASS. Within Project PASS, consultants were given a consultation protocol that consisted of typical behavioral consultation questions (e.g., "identify the setting in which the child has the most academic difficulties; what are the antecedent/consequent conditions?"). The questions listed on the PII protocol pertained to the presenting problem, conditions co-

occurring within the classroom, and goal-setting. Hence, the questions tended to be of a formal (as opposed to casual) nature. To ensure procedural integrity, consultants who participated in Project PASS closely followed this protocol during the PII. This action may have led to naïve observers' perceptions of high consultant composure and formality. Instead of trying to spontaneously generate questions, consultants used the questions that were listed on the Project PASS protocol. In contrast, within reason teachers were free to state whatever they wanted and could make the conversation less formal if they desired.

#### *The Relationship between RCCCS Dominance and Relational Variables*

Ratings of RCCCS dominance (regardless of whether a person was a consultant or teacher) affected naïve observers' ratings of involvement, similarity, and composure. With the exception of similarity, higher RCCCS dominance was associated with perceptions of more involvement and composure within the interviews. In contrast, higher dominance scores were associated with less similarity. Ratings of the relational dimensions of trust, depth, and formality were not affected by RCCCS dominance.

These findings suggest that being highly dominant on the RCCCS does affect some, but not all, relational dimensions that exist within dyadic interactions. The RCCCS defines dominance for Person A as the number of one-ups by Person A responded to by one-downs by Person B. Thus, a person who is highly dominant may be perceived as more composed because he/she may be seen as being able to get his/her point across without resistance from the other person. Because of this lack of resistance, he/she may be perceived as being more relaxed and less anxious during the interview. Similarly, a highly dominant speaker may be seen as highly involved because he/she may be perceived as being more invested or

persistent in getting the other speaker to see things his/her way (and thus responding with one-downs to one-ups).

In contrast, similarity was inversely related to dominance. That is, speakers who were rated as relatively high on RCCCS dominance were perceived as conveying fewer signals of similarity than those who were rated as relatively low on RCCCS dominance. A speaker who is highly dominant, assumes the “leader” role within the conversation and therefore may not be seen as similar by naïve observers. This finding is similar to a point made by Erchul and Raven (1997) when discussing the resources (i.e., social power bases) that a school psychologist can utilize to change the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of a teacher. Erchul and Raven pointed out that school psychologists often have to choose between being perceived as an “expert” or being perceived as similar (e.g., “referent”) to the consultee. It is difficult to be perceived as both, because someone who is perceived to have more knowledge about the subject at hand cannot also be perceived as similar. Likewise, a person who is seen as an equal cannot be seen as more knowledgeable (i.e., the expert-referent dilemma). Thus, a person must often choose whether to be perceived as one who possesses a great deal of knowledge about the subject (i.e., expert) or one who is similar (i.e., referent) to other person. The inverse relationship between similarity and RCCCS dominance may represent a similar phenomenon. It may be difficult for the person who assumes the “leader” role within an interaction to also maintain perceptions of similarity to the other speaker who has assumed the role of a “follower.”

In contrast to the findings above, trust, depth, and formality were not affected by RCCCS dominance. Thus, these relational variables may exist within dyadic interactions

regardless of the speaker's level of dominance within the conversation. In sum, results from this study suggest that some relational variables (i.e., involvement, similarity, composure) may be more affected by how dominant a speaker is than some others (i.e., trust, depth, formality).

*Differences on the Relational Dimensions Between High and Low Dominance Consultants and Consulees*

Recall that Research Question 2 asked: what other RCS relational dimensions characterize a consultant scoring high on RCCCS dominance and a consultant scoring lower on RCCCS dominance? When taking into account both level of dominance and status (i.e., teacher and consultant), several findings emerged. First, high and low dominance consultants did not differ on any of the relational dimensions. Thus, ratings of involvement, trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality did not differ between the consultant who was considered high in dominance and the consultant considered lower in dominance.

Research Question 3 asked: what other RCS relational dimensions characterize a consulee scoring high on RCCCS dominance and a consulee scoring lower on RCCCS dominance? In contrast to high and low dominance consultants, differences in involvement and depth did exist, however, for high and low dominance consulees. The higher RCCCS dominance consulee was perceived as more involved and having more depth than the one who was considered lower in RCCCS dominance.

In regard to Research Question 2, the failure to find an effect for consultants (i.e., high and low dominance consultants did not differ on any of the relational dimensions) may support the idea that regardless of whether a consultant exerts a high or low degree of

relational control, he/she will still emanate qualities of involvement, similarity, depth, composure, and formality. Thus, a consultant can take on the “leader” or “follower” role and still be perceived as involved, trustworthy, similar to the consultee, composed, and convey a sense of formality and depth within the conversation. Additionally, across both teachers and consultants, the RCS dominance dimension was positively correlated with both RCS involvement and depth, thus suggesting that speakers high in dominance may also be high in depth and involvement (Table 4). Caution should be exercised, however, when examining these results in conjunction with results mentioned above. Clearly, dominance (regardless of role) does influence perceptions of some relational dimensions (i.e., involvement, similarity, and composure), but when taken in context of the consultant role, the effect seems to be lost.

Related to the collaboration debate, this finding suggests that consultants can be directive and collaborative within consultation. In support of both Gutkin (1999a) and Erchul (1992), collaboration and control are not dichotomous. In addition, variables such as trust, composure, involvement, similarity, formality, and depth may be equally (if not more) important than dominance in characterizing interactions between consultants and consultees. Thus, these relational dimensions need to be further examined to understand their role within consultant-consultee interactions. Although interesting, caution should clearly be taken in interpreting this failure to find significance. Due to the novelty of this research and its exploratory nature, the null finding was presented here to alert future researchers of potential issues that may require further investigation.

The finding related to Research Question 3, namely that consultee dominance does affect ratings of involvement and depth, suggests that these relational dimensions may be

particularly vulnerable to consultees' acceptance of the "leader role" within consultant-consultee interactions. The consultee who was more dominant (i.e., assumed a leader role) within interactions was seen as more involved and moved the conversation to deeper levels when compared to the one who was less dominant (i.e., assumed the "follower" role) within consultant-consultee interactions.

These findings may highlight the need to understand consultee behavior within consultation, particularly as it relates to dominance. Given that past research has linked consultee dominance/domineeringness with both positive (e.g., teacher ratings of treatment effectiveness, student progress toward target behavior; Erchul, DuPaul et al., 2007) and negative (e.g., consultant perceptions of consultee willingness to collect baseline data; Erchul, 1987) outcomes, the role of consultee dominance within consultant-consultee interactions needs to be better understood. The results from the current study suggest that consultee dominance may influence perceptions by others of consultee involvement and depth during consultation interactions. Although the current study lacks outcome data, future investigations may pursue whether involvement and depth are potential mediators in the consultee dominance-outcome relationship. Taken together, consultee dominance is clearly a complex variable that may be closely tied to the relational dimensions of involvement and depth.

#### *Relationship Between Consultant Dominance on the RCS and RCCCS*

Recall that Hypothesis 1 stated that when compared to a consultant scoring low on RCCCS dominance, a consultant scoring higher on RCCCS dominance will be rated higher by naive observers on the RCS dominance dimension. Results demonstrated that the

consultant who was rated as having higher dominance on the RCCCS was rated as higher on the dominance dimension of the RCS. Likewise, the consultant who was rated as having lower dominance on the RCCCS was rated as lower on the dominance dimension of the RCS. Naïve observers were able to discern differences in dominance between the two consultants on the RCS. These results are discussed in more detail below.

#### *Relationship Between Consultee Dominance on the RCS and RCCCS*

Recall that Hypothesis 2 stated that when compared to a consultee scoring low on RCCCS dominance, a consultee scoring higher on RCCCS dominance will be rated higher by naive observers on the RCS dominance dimension. Similar to the finding presented above, the results from this study showed that the consultee who was rated as having higher dominance on the RCCCS was rated as higher on the dominance dimension of the RCS, and the consultee who was rated as having lower dominance on the RCCCS was rated as lower on the dominance dimension of the RCS. Naïve observers were able to discern differences in dominance between the two consultees on the RCS. In conjunction with the findings from Hypothesis 1 (above), these results highlight the importance of dominance within consultation. Differences in dominance appear to be observed whether a person is using an observer-defined coding method or a rating scale. Based upon the results, dominance/relational control continues to be an important variable to understand in consultant-consultee interactions.

#### *Limitations*

Several limitations in the design, methodology, and sample are apparent in this research and thus deserve attention. First, naïve observers listened to samples of

conversations between two consultant-consultee dyads. Thus, the verbal behavior that they were required to listen to was limited by length of interaction. The study could have been enriched by having naïve observers listen to more consultation sessions. The inclusion of more consultation sessions would have also allowed them to listen to a broader sample of dominance. That is, they would have been able to listen to more conversations with varying levels of dominance. Additionally, because the participants only listened to two interviews, it is possible that they may be reacting to something other than the differences in dominance (e.g., voice intonation) and this may influence some of their ratings.

Second, this study utilized naïve observers with no prior experience with consultation. Although participants were given a short description of what the consultation process entailed, they still may have had difficulty understanding the nature and purpose of consultation. Additionally, naïve observers consisted of mostly college freshmen who were required to complete a certain number of research credits. Given that their participation was not entirely voluntary (i.e., they had to participate in some experiment to receive a grade in their Introductory Psychology) class, they may not have had a high degree of interest in the project. This lack of interest could contribute to a failure to pay close attention to the interviews or ratings.

Third, this study relied on a single rating scale to gather information about the different dimensions of verbal behavior. Thus, findings for each of the dependent variables were based upon ratings on several items from a rating scale. Using several different rating scales or other methodologies (e.g., coding schemes) to measure the relational dimensions could have helped to further validate the study's findings.

Last, this study was an initial exploration into the relational dimensions that may characterize consultation. Because of the novelty of the research questions, no outcome data were collected. Therefore, it is not clear how the relational dimensions of involvement, trust, similarity, depth, composure, and formality relate to outcomes (e.g., consultant effectiveness, consultee satisfaction, treatment integrity, client behavior) within consultation. Lacking these data, there is no way of knowing whether displaying more involvement, for example, during consultant-consultee interactions leads to better outcomes.

#### *Future Directions*

Following from the study's findings and limitations, several future research directions are suggested. First, relatively little is known about how nonverbal communication (e.g., eye gaze, physical distance, intonation) affects the consultation relationship. In fact, most consultation verbal processes studies have been conducted using audiotaped interviews (e.g., Erchul, 1987; Erchul, DuPaul, et al. 2007). In contrast, many relational communication studies have relied on both verbal and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., Burgoon & Hale, 1987; Burgoon, Pfau, Birk, & Manusov; Gallagher, Harthung, Gerzina, Gregory, & Merolla, 2004; Walther & Burgoon, 1992). In fact, although the RCS can be used to look exclusively at verbal behavior, the RCS was developed as a tool to assess both verbal and nonverbal behavior (Burgoon & Hale). Given the importance of nonverbal communication, it would be interesting to see if observers' or participants' views on the relationship change when nonverbal behavior is viewed in conjunction with verbal behavior. Thus, future studies on relational communication within consultation should try to observe both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Second, as mentioned earlier, a limitation to the design is the use of naïve observers. It is reasonable to expect that perceptions on the process of consultation may change depending on one's level of training. For instance, a school psychologist who has extensive training and experience with school consultation may view a consultee's verbal behaviors differently than a naïve observer. A future research direction may be to use the participant version of the RCS in actual consultation interviews to see whether the relational dimensions of involvement, trust, similarity, depth, composure, and formality are present in real-time interviews.

Third, with regard to the many different dimensions of relational communication, it will be important to understand perceptions of effectiveness. That is, which relational dimensions do consultants and consultees believe is most important to an effective consultation? Future studies should explore the degree of involvement, trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality that school psychologists and teachers believe they should display during consultation interviews. Similarly, future studies should also explore the degree of involvement, trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality that school psychologists and teachers believe should be displayed by the other person in the interview.

Finally, and most importantly, future consultation studies need to focus on understanding how the various relational dimensions relate to consultation outcomes such as treatment integrity, treatment acceptability, and in particular client behavior. A major limitation of the consultation interpersonal influence research is the lack of inclusion of consultee and client outcomes (Erchul, Grissom, & Getty, 2008). It would be interesting to see whether any of the relational dimensions contribute to a change in consultee behavior

(e.g., by fully implementing each step of the intervention) and in turn, client behavior (e.g., improving academic and behavioral indicators).

### *Summary and Conclusions*

The main goal of this study was to understand what other relational variables, besides dominance-submission, characterize consultant-consultee interactions. The results indicated that other relational dimensions (i.e., involvement, trust, similarity, depth, composure, formality) may also play an important role in the consultation relationship. Interestingly, these other relational dimensions can co-exist at varying levels within the consultation relationship even when levels of dominance differ. That is, results suggest that although dominance is clearly an important variable in the process of consultation, other variables may be equally (if not more) important to consultant-consultee interactions. Thus, by focusing only on dominance, we may be neglecting other important variables. As stated by Burgoon and Hale (1987), concentrating on only one relational variable, “may mask the diversity of relational message themes, or topoi, that are possible and may lead to an underestimate of how much relational meaning is present in a typical exchange” (p. 194).

By understanding more about the verbal processes that occur within consultation, we may be able to learn more about how to conduct effective consultation interviews that maximize benefits for both consultees and clients. Although this study did not incorporate social validity or consultee/client behavioral outcomes, other studies have demonstrated that consultant dominance/control within behavioral consultation is associated with positive outcomes and thus consultant training should acknowledge that the nature of consultation is best characterized as a “leader-follower” relationship as opposed to a co-equal,

nonhierarchical relationship (Erchul, 1987; Erchul et al., 1995; Witt et al., 1991). In sum, by expanding the relational focus within consultant-consultee interactions, we may be learning more about the variables that characterize effective consultation.

One of the most interesting findings within this study was that naïve observers viewed consultants as displaying more involvement, trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality than consultees. Based upon this finding, it is fair to conclude that the verbal behavior of consultants differs from consultees during the consultation process. As mentioned earlier, the study of relational communication within dyads focuses on the way speakers define their relationships with one another. The findings from this study suggest that consultants and consultees are defining their relationship in different ways and thus assuming different roles within consultation.

Although when compared to consultees, consultants displayed more involvement, trust, depth, similarity, composure, and formality, it is clear that the verbal behavior of consultees during the consultation process is also important. In particular, the dimensions of depth and involvement seemed to differ depending on whether a consultee was considered high or low in dominance. The consultee who was higher in dominance was considered more involved and made the conversation seem less superficial than the consultee who was lower in dominance. Given these findings, it may be that certain relational dimensions of consultees' verbal behavior are affected by the level of dominance that they display in their interactions with consultants. Similarly, it continues to be important to understand not only consultants' behavior in consultation, but also (a) consultees' behaviors and (b) the interactions that occur between the consultant and consultee.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table A

Table A

*Communication Studies that Have Used the Relational Communication Scale (RCS)*

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Burgoon & Koper (1984)	90 participants conversed with a friend and a stranger about a predetermined controversial topic. Prior to conversing, each participant completed a reticence measure to determine propensity to avoid/approach group situation and whether they found communication valuable. After each interaction, the RCS was completed.	emotional/arousal/composure, dominance/submission, nonimmediacy, and intimacy/similarity	Strangers (when compared to friends) tended to rate reticents as more submissive, less intimate, similar to themselves, less composed, and more detached. Friends tended to rate reticents' relational communication more positively overall.
Burgoon, Coker, & Coker (1986)	145 participants were asked to conduct a mock interview with an interviewee (confederate). Confederates were asked to modify their eye gaze (gaze aversion, normal eye gaze, intense/constant eye gaze). Additionally, participants either were told that the interviewee was well-qualified (high reward condition) or not well-qualified (low reward condition). After the interview, the participants were asked to fill out an RCS.	immediacy, depth/similarity, receptivity/trust, composure, dominance, formality, and equality	Results showed that participants tended to perceive confederates who often averted their gaze (e.g., looked down) as less immediate, similar, trustworthy, and composed. There were no differences among the relational dimensions in the normal or constant gaze conditions. Those confederates were initially considered highly rewarding (e.g., those with good credentials) and were also perceived as more favorable on the relational dimensions. Interestingly, rewarding males using intense gaze were viewed as dominant, but rewarding intense gaze females were perceived as submissive.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Burgoon, Pfau, Parrott & Birk (1987)	Questionnaires administered via telephone interviews to 234 adults who had visited a physician in the past 6 months.	composure, immediacy, dominance, formality, receptivity, and similarity.	Perceived physicians' relational messages featuring more receptivity, immediacy, composure, formality, and similarity, and less dominance showed a substantial relationship to patient satisfaction. Receptivity was the strongest predictor of patient satisfaction. Similarity was the only relational domain predictive of patient compliance
Burgoon, Pfau, Birk, & Manusoc (1987)	110 undergraduate students engaged in a dyadic communication episode with a partner in which they were instructed to argue for/against an issue. The goal of the study was to see whether communication reticence (measured as either avoidance of conversations or as perceiving little value in communication) would discriminate among perceived relational communication themes.	Intimacy/similarity, nonimmediacy, dominance, and emotional arousal/composure/informality	Results generally showed that that reticents that did not perceive value in communication were perceived by their partner to express less intimacy and similarity. Reticent avoiders (those that tended to avoid or fear group interactions) did not differ in perceived relational communication when compared to their non-reticent peers.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Burgoon & Hale (1988)	Study involved 82 dyads in which pairs were assigned to conditions in which a confederate used nonverbal behaviors to signal intense involvement (i.e., leaning forward), noninvolvement, or neutrality.	intimacy, detachment (nonimmediacy), and involvement/emotional arousal	Results indicated that variations in nonverbal behavior altered participant's perceptions of the confederate's intimacy, level of detachment, involvement, and dominance. The RCS adequately distinguished among the different conditions.
Kelley & Burgoon (1991)	Husband/wife pairs were given a modified version of the RCS and were asked to rate each item based on current partner behavior and expected partner behavior (how a husband/wife should act). They also assigned a +/- valence to the observed/expected discrepancy (if it existed).	intimacy, dominance, equality/trust, receptivity, distance, composure, and informality	Discrepancy scores were calculated for each dimension by subtracting expected from observed values and then assigning the appropriate valence. This discrepancy score for each dimension was then correlated with a marriage satisfaction score. Discrepancy scores were positively correlated with satisfaction scores. Also, discrepancy scores tended to predict marital satisfaction scores better than similarity on relational expectancy scores.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Burgoon, Walther, & Baesler (1992)	78 dyads composed of a participant and confederate engaged in a problem-solving conversation. Participants were placed with confederates who were considered either high valence (attractive, high status, more expertise) or low valence who were asked to briefly touch or not touch participants during conversations. Participants then filled out the RCS.	immediacy/affection, similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, relaxation/composure, dominance, formality, and task/social orientation	When touch occurred, participants rated confederates as having more immediacy/affection, similarity, relaxation, informality, and task orientation which were related to positive evaluations. Dominance showed no touch effects. High valence confederates were thought to express more immediacy/affection and composure, but greater formality when compared to low valence confederates.
Walther & Burgoon (1992)	96 participants were assigned specific tasks to complete over the course of 5 weeks in either in face-to-face group or in groups that only communicated via computer conferencing. Participants completed the RCS after completing each task. Data were factor analyzed to produce a unique (although very similar to past factors) factor solution.	immediacy/affection, similarity/depth, dominance, equality, receptivity/trust, attempted dominance, composure/ relaxation, and formality	Past studies have suggested that participants in computer conferencing groups tend to rate relational dimensions more negatively (e.g., less affection, less trust, less equality). This study tends to show improvement over time in ratings of relational dimensions. By the end of the study, groups had similar ratings on all relational dimensions.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Burgoon & Le Poire (1993)	Participants and confederates engaged in conversation. Participants were given the impression that confederates had favorable/unfavorable personality traits and pleasant/unpleasant communication style on that particular day. Confederates were asked to act pleasant or unpleasant in the subsequent conversation. A 15-item version of the RCS was only used to check whether the confederate's manipulation (acting pleasant/unpleasant) was successful.	immediacy, affection, composure, dominance, and formality	Results showed that confederates who were supposed to act more pleasant in conversation were rated by observers as being more affectionate, and displayed more immediacy than those who were supposed to act unpleasant in conversations with participants.
Burgoon & Buller (1994)	120 dyadic interactions between undergraduates who were supposed to be either an interviewee or an interviewer. Interviewees were instructed to either lie or tell the truth to a interviewer. The interviewer was instructed to display nonverbal behaviors indicating that he/she was highly suspicious, somewhat suspicious, or not suspicious at all.	Immediacy, affection, composure, dominance, formality, and receptivity/trust	Interviewers tended to perceive the relational messages of those who told the truth as more affectionate, immediate (i.e., seemed more involved), composed, informal, and dominant than those who told the truth.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Floyd & Voloudakis (1999)	40 pairs of platonic friends engaged in two conversations. In the first, conversation preceded normally. In the second, one participant was asked to either display more affection (however they saw fit) or less affection. Following each conversation the participants were asked to fill out the RCS.	immediacy, similarity, receptivity/trust, composure, dominance, formality, and equality	Results showed that with decreased affections, participants rated their friends as displaying less immediacy, similarity, receptive, composed, informality, and equality to themselves. Results tended to be opposite for those in the high affection condition, although they did not reach significance.
Kelley (1999)	This study was based on data from Kelley & Burgoon (1991). Researchers tested differences in expectancies of relational themes in three different types of marriages: traditionals (couples that hold traditional values and tend to be very interdependent), independents (value psychological closeness, but less conventional than traditionals), and separates (tend to express less positive feelings and avoid conflict). Husband/wife pairs were given a modified version of the RCS and were asked to rate each item based on current partner behavior and expected partner behavior (how a husband/wife should act). They also assigned a +/- valence to the discrepancy (if it existed).	intimacy, dominance, equality/trust, receptivity, distance, composure, and informality	Those considered traditional couples tended to have fewer violations or positive violations between what was expected and what was observed. Separates tended to have the most negative violations. Additionally, discrepancy scores (calculated by subtracting expected from observed values on each dimension and assigning the proper valence) discriminated among couple types with the exception of the informality dimension.

Table A (continued).

Authors	Study Description	RCS Dimensions Used	Major Relational Findings
Gallagher, Hartung, & Gregory (2001)	Analyzed the 34-item version of the observer form of RCS (called RCS-O) to examine psychometric properties. Three observers rated 13 physician-patient interactions. Results were compared to a frequently use interpersonal communication rating scale for physicians.	immediacy/affection, similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, composure, formality, and dominance	Results indicated that the RCS-O had overall fair to good psychometric properties. Internal consistency for subscales was good with the exception of the dominance scale. Additionally, the formality and dominance scales had low interrater reliability and failed to converge with another measure of interpersonal communication. The authors suggested dropping the dominance and formality scales from the RCS-O.
Gallagher, Hartung, Gerzina, Gregory, Merolla, (2005)	6 observers used the RCS-O to rate 80 videotapes of physician (med students)-patient interactions. Based on the year in program, physicians were instructed to be more “concern oriented” or more “skill oriented.”	immediacy/affection, similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, composure, formality, and dominance	Overall, results supported the RCS as a reliable and valid measure of physician interaction. The RCS tended to have fair to good reliability characteristics (measured by internal consistency and interrater reliability statistics). Factor analysis revealed four dimensions (intimacy, composure, dominance, and formality). Results also tended to show that physicians that were more “skill-oriented” were also perceived as more dominant in interactions.

Appendix B: Table B

Table B

*Definitions of Burgoon and Hale's (1984, 1987) Relational Dimensions Used on the Current Version of the Relational Communication Scale (RCS; Hale et al., 2005)*

Scale	Definition
Intimacy	degree of closeness, conveyed liking, and trust that exists within a dyad
Involvement	degree to which relational partners express attentiveness, interest, and accessibility towards one another
Affection	degree to which a partner signals liking and attraction to one another
Receptivity/ Trust	degree of openness to the other party and the degree to which mutual trust, sincerity, and respect are communicated
Depth	degree to which a sense of familiarity/non-superficiality are displayed
Similarity/ Inclusion	signal the degree of demographic, value, and attitudinal similarities being expressed
Dominance	concerns the extent to which a relationship is one of equality or one of inequality, with one party expressing power, superiority, assertiveness, control, and influence and the other displaying submissiveness
Composure	includes messages related to how relaxed, composed, or anxious and tense one feels in the presence of a partner
Formality	concerns the extent to which parties behave in formal and proper ways or makes the interactions between them informal
Task vs. Social Orientation	degree to which the relational exchange is more task-focused or has personal relational elements

Appendix C: Relational Communication Scale (RCS)

- RCS: Consultant Version
- RCS: Teacher Version
- Description of Scale Dimensions

Participant ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

RCS #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Relational Communication Scale (RCS)**  
 Hale, Burgoon, & Householder, 2005  
 (Consultant Version)

*Directions: Please circle your response to the following items. Make sure to answer every item*

	Questions	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Strongly Agree
1.	The consultant was highly involved in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
2.	The consultant showed enthusiasm while talking to the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
3.	The consultant was not fully engaged in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
4.	The consultant acted bored by the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
5.	The consultant was interested in what the teacher had to say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
6.	The consultant created a sense of distance between herself and the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
7.	The consultant was detached during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
8.	The consultant was unreceptive to what the teacher had to say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
9.	The consultant tried to win the teacher's trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
10.	The consultant was open to the teacher's ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
11.	The consultant appeared honest and truthful when communicating with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
12.	The consultant was unwilling to listen to the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
13.	The consultant was sincere in communicating with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
14.	The consultant didn't care what the teacher thought.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
15.	The consultant tried to establish rapport with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
16.	The consultant tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
17.	The consultant showed no desire for further interaction with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

	Questions	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
18.	The consultant created an air of familiarity between the pair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	The consultant tried to create a more personal relationship with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	The consultant kept the conversation at an impersonal level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	The consultant acted like they were good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	The consultant made the conversation seem superficial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	The consultant made the teacher feel that they were similar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	The consultant tried to establish common ground with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	The consultant made the differences between the two evident.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	The consultant made the teacher feel like they didn't have a lot in common.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	The consultant acted like she was more powerful than the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	The consultant treated the teacher like an equal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	The consultant let the teacher take the lead in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	The consultant attempted to persuade the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	The consultant took the initiative in directing the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	The consultant was very submissive toward the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	The consultant dominated the conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	The consultant didn't try to influence the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	The consultant was not very assertive with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	The consultant took control of the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	The consultant had the upper hand in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	The consultant made her presence felt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	The consultant did more talking than listening.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	The consultant was very skillful in managing the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	The consultant was influenced by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Questions	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
42.	The consultant was completely self-confident when interacting with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	The consultant was more of a follower than a leader during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44.	The consultant was not very smooth verbally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45.	The consultant showed a lot of poise during the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	The consultant was responsible for keeping the conversation going.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	The consultant had a dramatic way of interacting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	The consultant had trouble thinking of things to talk to the teacher about.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	The consultant was very expressive during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	The consultant was very calm and poised with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	The consultant expressed annoyance with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	The consultant revealed feelings of tension while talking with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	The consultant appeared to be comfortable talking with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	The consultant acted relaxed and at ease while talking with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	The consultant acted frustrated with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	The consultant was energized and active while interacting with the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57.	The consultant seemed nervous in the teacher's presence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58.	The consultant kept the interaction at a formal level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59.	The consultant tried to make the conversation informal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60.	The consultant tried to make the conversation very business-like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61.	The consultant tried to make the interaction easygoing and relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62.	The consultant took a casual approach to the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Participant ID #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

RCS #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time: \_\_\_\_\_

The Relational Communication Scale (RCS)  
 Hale, Burgoon, & Householder, 2005  
 (Teacher Version)

*Directions: Please circle your response to the following items. Make sure to answer every item*

	Questions	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree			
1.	The teacher was highly involved in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2.	The teacher showed enthusiasm while talking to the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3.	The teacher was not fully engaged in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4.	The teacher acted bored by the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5.	The teacher was interested in what the consultant had to say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
6.	The teacher created a sense of distance between herself and the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
7.	The teacher was detached during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
8.	The teacher was unreceptive to what the teacher had to say.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
9.	The teacher tried to win the consultant's trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
10.	The teacher was open to the consultant's ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11.	The teacher appeared honest and truthful when communicating with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
12.	The teacher was unwilling to listen to the consultant .	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
13.	The teacher was sincere in communicating with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
14.	The teacher didn't care what the consultant thought.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
15.	The teacher tried to establish rapport with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
16.	The teacher tried to move the conversation to a deeper level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
17.	The teacher showed no desire for further interaction with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

	Questions	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
18.	The teacher created an air of familiarity between the pair.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	The teacher tried to create a more personal relationship with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	The teacher kept the conversation at an impersonal level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	The teacher acted like they were good friends.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	The teacher made the conversation seem superficial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	The teacher made the consultant feel that they were similar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	The teacher tried to establish common ground with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	The teacher made the differences between the two evident.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	The teacher made the consultant feel like they didn't have a lot in common.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	The teacher acted like she was more powerful than the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	The teacher treated the consultant like an equal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	The teacher let the consultant take the lead in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	The teacher attempted to persuade the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	The teacher took the initiative in directing the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	The teacher was very submissive toward the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	The teacher dominated the conversation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	The teacher didn't try to influence the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	The teacher was not very assertive with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	The teacher took control of the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	The teacher had the upper hand in the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	The teacher made her presence felt.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39.	The teacher did more talking than listening.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40.	The teacher was very skillful in managing the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41.	The teacher was influenced by the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Questions	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
42.	The teacher was completely self-confident when interacting with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43.	The teacher was more of a follower than a leader during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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45.	The teacher showed a lot of poise during the interaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46.	The teacher was responsible for keeping the conversation going.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47.	The teacher had a dramatic way of interacting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48.	The teacher had trouble thinking of things to talk to the consultant about.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	The teacher was very expressive during the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	The teacher was very calm and poised with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	The teacher expressed annoyance with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	The teacher revealed feelings of tension while talking with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	The teacher appeared to be comfortable talking with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	The teacher acted relaxed and at ease while talking with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	The teacher acted frustrated with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	The teacher was energized and active while interacting with the consultant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57.	The teacher seemed nervous in the consultant's presence.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58.	The teacher kept the interaction at a formal level.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59.	The teacher tried to make the conversation informal.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60.	The teacher tried to make the conversation very business-like.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61.	The teacher tried to make the interaction easygoing and relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62.	The teacher took a casual approach to the conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

RCS Relational Dimensions

*Below is a listing of the dimensions of the RCS and the corresponding item numbers.*

Involvement: Items 1-7

Receptivity/Trust: Items: 8-15

Depth: Items 16-22

Similarity/Inclusion: Items 23-28

Dominance: Items 29-49

Composure/Emotional (Non) arousal: Items 50-57

Formality: Items 58-62

Appendix D: Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Information Sheet

Participant ID: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please answer the following items about yourself by circling or writing the appropriate response. All responses will be treated confidentially.*

**Sex** (circle one): Male                      Female

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ years

**Year/Class at NC State** (*circle one*): Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Other

**Race/Ethnicity**

(*circle one*):      American Indian/Alaskan Native      Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
Asian  
Hispanic/Latino      Black or African American  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_      White