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ABSTRACT

A two-dimensional, four-category model for classifying the way that people relate to others, or relationship style, was developed by T. Alessandra (1987). The model characterizes style in terms of openness, with poles of open and self-contained, and directness, with poles of direct and indirect. Combining the poles of the two dimensions yields the relationship types of: (1) director; (2) thinker; (3) socializer; and (4) relater. These dimensions were used to create a 16-item semantic differential scale called the Test of Relationship Style. After an initial test with 100 undergraduates, the instrument was administered to 58 men and 96 women participating in an amateur tennis tournament, who also completed measures of goal and task orientation, sportsmanship, mood, and liking for challenge. Subjects were classified into the four relationship styles and compared for the other measures. Directors tended to be male, tennis singles players, with poor sportsmanship, high ego orientation, and a good bit of anger, while relaters were women with low ego orientation, doubles players, with little inclination for challenge. Socializers were more likely to be women with good sportsmanship attitudes, little anger, and an inclination to be challenged. Thinkers were likely to be in the middle on most things. Findings conformed to anecdotal descriptions of the four relationship styles, providing some confirmation of validity. (Contains one table, two figures, and six references.) (SLD)

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Development and Validation of a Test of Relationship Style

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Although the way that people typically relate to information, or cognitive style, has been widely studied in the context of education, the way that people typically relate to other people, or *relationship style*, has not. This is surprising since learning and teaching are interactional or interpersonal processes as well as informational ones. Most categorizations of teaching take into account aspects of interaction between teacher and student (Tuckman, 1995). If indeed people do have distinctly different ways or styles of relating, then teachers by following the same style with all students may be creating alienation and misunderstanding in all too many instances. To treat individual students in a way with which each will be most comfortable requires an understanding of what that way is for each one and how to carry it out.

In the business management context, Alessandra (1987) developed a two-dimensional/four category model for classifying relationship style. The two dimensions were *openness* (with poles of open and self-contained) and *directness* (with poles of direct and indirect). *Self-contained* people tend to keep their distance and maintain their territory. In other words, they like their privacy. They are not usually "touchers." In addition, they are likely to be task-oriented, time-bound, and well-organized (and are probably hard to see without an appointment). *Open* people, by comparison, are people-oriented, emotional, accessible, and operate on their own time clock. It may be accurate to say that they can "be read like a book" and "wear their hearts on their

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sleeves." They like to get close to people, both physically and emotionally.

On the directness dimension, *indirect* people are cautious, nonconfrontive avoiders of risk who speak softly, eschew eye contact and are slow at making decisions. They believe in following rules, and when they find themselves in a gray area without well-defined rules, they seek permission to proceed. *Direct* people are loud, fast-acting types who often come at others head on. They tend to be success seekers (rather than failure-avoiders like their indirect brethren), and believe that rules are made to be broken. When direct people find themselves in a gray area, they can be expected to push on ahead.

Combining the poles of the two dimensions yields four distinct relationship types: (1) *director* - a self-contained but direct person who likes to be the leader or boss in order to be sure the job gets done, but often steps on toes; (2) *thinker* - a self-contained, indirect person who prefers to work behind the scenes at his/her own pace gathering facts and solving problems; (3) *socializer* - an open, direct person who is spontaneous, outgoing and upbeat but prone to exaggeration; (4) *relater* - an open but indirect person who is the team player and communicator, urging others to express their feelings. In terms of images, the director is the bull, the thinker the owl, and socializer the butterfly, and the relater the deer. (The four types have been described by Tuckman, 1992, and are illustrated in Figure 1). Students who are directors may tend to challenge a teacher's authority, while student socializers may appear somewhat rambunctious and overactive to teachers, in contrast to the more sedate thinkers and relaters.

The purpose of this research was (1) to use the descriptions of the two dimensions to create a measuring instrument that could be used to classify people into

each of the four relationship styles; (2) to administer the instrument to a group of people along with other measures to obtain data that would serve to validate it.

Instrument Development

Using the characteristics which serve to describe the dimensions of open-self contained and direct-indirect, a 16 item semantic differential scale called the Test of Relationship Style (or TORS) was developed. (The instrument is shown in Figure 2.) The semantic differential format was chosen because of the polar nature of the dimensions. In each item, a space was left for a fill-in word, and a pair of polar opposite fill-in words were provided on the seven-point semantic differential scale. For example, the first item was: "It is _____ for other people to tell what I am feeling," and below it was a seven-point scale with the words "hard" and "easy" at the two ends. The respondent was instructed to make a check on the hard/easy line closest to the word that he/she would use to complete the statement.

The instrument was administered to 100 undergraduate college students, juniors and seniors, enrolled in the teacher education sequence, and individual item scores were correlated with dimension scores to determine the degree to which items written to measure each dimension were consistent with one another, and different from items to measure the other dimension. Because of the level of description provided for each dimension, high consistency was expected and indeed obtained. All items had correlations of at least .45 with the dimension they were written to fit, and none were higher than .19 with the dimension they were not written to fit. Moreover, a corrected split-half reliability of .77 was obtained on a version of the scale with successive items alternating between the two dimensions.

The Validity Study

Method. *The Test of Relationship style* (TORS) was administered to 58 men and 96 women between the ages of 21 and 75 who were gathered to participate in a regional amateur tennis tournament, on the eve of the tournament's start. Participants ranged across four levels of skill (as rated by local professionals); 37 were there to play singles and 117 doubles. All participants also completed a battery of instruments measuring such characteristics as their attitudes toward sportsmanship, goal orientation, mood, and motivation for participation.

Goal orientation was measured by the *Task and Ego Orientation for Sport Questionnaire* developed by Duda and White (1992). Task orientation represents an orientation toward achieving mastery by improving skill, knowledge, and insight in contrast to ego orientation or the focus on winning represented by comparing one's own performance with that of others (Duda and Nicholls, 1992). Duda and White (1992) report alpha reliability coefficients of .79 and .81 for task and ego subscales respectively.

Sportsmanship attitudes were measured by the *Sports Attitude Questionnaire* developed by Shaw (1995). This 12-item instrument presents respondents with moral dilemmas involving sportsmanship and asks them to rate their inclination to perform a given behavior in response on a 5-point Likert scale.

Mood was measured using the *Mood Thermometers* (Tuckman, 1988), a visual instrument that uses Guttman scaling to measure five moods: tension, confusion, anger, fatigue, and depression. Finally, respondents were asked to rate the likelihood that they would choose to play a maximizing challenging tennis match in contrast to one that would be easy to win.

Results. Scores on each TORS dimension, openness and directness, could range from a low of seven to a high of 56. The mean openness score overall was 27.2 (sd=7.2) and the mean directness score was 28.1 (sd=7.2). On openness, persons scoring between seven and 26 were classified as self-contained (O-), while people scoring between 27 and 56 were classified as open (O+). On directness, people scoring between seven and 27 were classified as indirect (D-), while people scoring between 28 and 56 were classified as direct (D+). Specific relationship styles were then classified as follows: director = O-, D+ (n=39), thinker = O-, D- (n=39), socializer = O+, D+ (n=39), relater = O+, D- (n=37). As can be seen, this scoring procedure yielded approximately equal numbers of the four relationship types.

Persons classified into the four styles were compared on gender, with the expectation that, based on social mores and expectations, women would be least likely to be directors and most likely to be either socializers or relaters. A chi-square of 9.12 (df=3, $p < .03$) was obtained between relationship style and *gender* with almost three-quarters of the socializers and relaters being women and more than half of the directors being men.

Persons classified into the four styles were compared on *whether they played singles or doubles*, with the expectation that because of socializing tendencies inherent in the different relationship types, directors would be more inclined to play singles and socializers and relaters to play doubles. A chi-square of 6.25 (df=3, $p < .10$) was obtained with directors the largest percentage of singles players and relaters the largest percentage of doubles players .

Members of the four relationship style groups were compared on the interval measures in the test battery using one-way ANOVAs and a number of significant or near significant differences were found. On *attitudes toward good sportsmanship*, a

significant F was found ($F=3.68$, $df=3/150$, $p<.02$) with directors being the poorest "sports" ($M=38.7$) and socializers ($M=41.6$) and thinkers ($M=41.6$) the best "sports." On *ego orientation*, the belief that "winning is everything," a significant F (2.67 , $df=3/150$, $p<.05$) was found, with directors ($M=31.1$) showing the highest ego orientation and relaters ($M=26.6$) the lowest. No significant differences were found on the task orientation dimension.

On the mood of *anger* ($F=2.15$, $df=3/150$, $p<.10$), directors were found to be the angriest ($M=29.8$) and socializers the least angry ($M=20.4$). No significant differences were found on any of the other mood measures. Finally, on *being there for the challenge*, a significant F (2.69 , $df=3/150$, $p<.05$) was based on highest scores for socializers ($M=6.7$) and the lowest scores for relaters ($M=5.8$) and thinkers ($M=6.0$). The findings are shown in Table 1.

Overall, then, directors tended to be male, singles players with poor sportsmanship attitudes, a high ego orientation, and a good bit of anger, while relaters were women playing doubles with low ego orientation and little inclination for challenge. Socializers tended to be women with good sportsmanship attitudes, little anger, but an inclination to be challenged, while thinkers were in the middle on most things, but did tend to be good sports and have little inclination for challenge. Given that the findings conformed closely to expectations based on anecdotal descriptions of the four relationship styles, the TORS was considered to have some validity.

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Table 1

Results of the Four Relationships Styles on the Validity Measures

Style	% of Men	% of Women	% of Singles	% of Doubles	Sportsmanship score	Ego Orient score	Anger score	Challenge score
Director	36	19	38	21	38	3.1	30	6.2
Thinker	29	23	22	26	42	2.8	28	6.0
Socializer	17	30	27	25	42	2.7	20	6.7
Relater	17	28	13	27	39	2.6	24	5.8

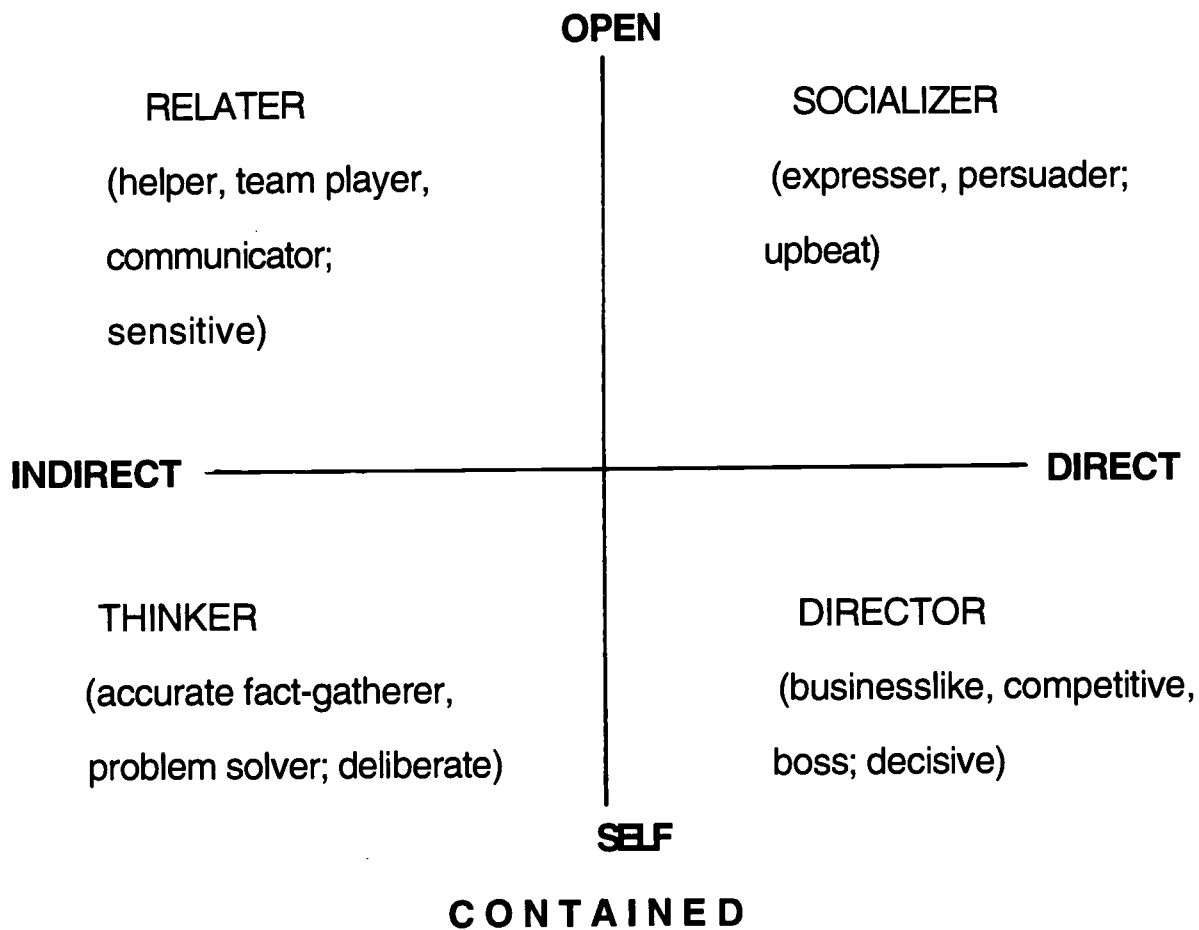


Figure 1. Four interpersonal types or relationship styles.

TORS

- 1) It is _____ for other people to tell what I am feeling.
hard ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ easy
- 2) When it comes to making decisions, I tend to act _____.
quickly ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ slowly
- 3) When I am talking to someone I like, I _____ having them touch me.
like ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ dislike
- 4) When speaking in public, I tend to speak _____.
soft/slow ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ loud/fast
- 5) When it comes to people, the thing I like most is _____.
space ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ contact
- 6) In general, I would say that I prefer _____.
change ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ constancy
- 7) I consider myself to be _____.
task-oriented ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ people-oriented
- 8) I will _____ interrupt what I am doing, if someone wants to see me.
always ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ never
- 9) When it comes to action, sometimes I do too _____.
much ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ little
- 10) When it comes to making decisions, I tend to act with _____.
caution ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ risk
- 11) When it comes to managing my life, I am very _____.
flexible ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ organized
- 12) When in a "gray area" about whether something is OK to do, I _____.
just do it ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ seek permission
- 13) When around people, I _____ getting close to them physically.
like ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ dislike
- 14) My biggest shortcoming is that I sometimes am _____.
wishy washy ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ pushy
- 15) I _____ that "time is money" and should not be wasted.
strongly agree ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ strongly disagree
- 16) I consider myself to be a _____.
failure avoider ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ success seeker

OPENNESS = (items 1 + 5 + 7 + 15) - (items 3 + 8 + 11 + 13)

DIRECTNESS = (items 4 + 10 + 14 + 16) - (items 2 + 6 + 9 + 12)

Figure 2. The Test of Relationship Style



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