DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 410 600 CS 509 552

AUTHOR Leichty, Greg
TITLE Making Sense of the Role Category Questionnaire.
PUB DATE 1997-04-00
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern States Communication Association (Savannah, GA, April 2-6, 1997).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; Communication Skills; Higher Education; *Interpersonal Communication; Intimacy; Literature Reviews; *Questionnaires; Research Needs; Validity
IDENTIFIERS Communication Behavior; Research Suggestions; *Role Category Questionnaire (Crockett)

ABSTRACT

Despite over 30 years of review and analysis, researchers still are unclear as to what W.H. Crockett's Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ) of interpersonal differentiation actually measures. Among the constructivists, at least four different explanations have been advanced. The "orthodox" interpretation holds that the RCQ constitutes a representative sample of the constructs available for construing others. A review of the literature suggests that it is time to shift from seeing RCQ based differentiation as a representation to viewing it as a measure of process. A process/motivational explanation incorporates the core insights of each of the alternate positions and simultaneously explains the relationship between several RCQ measures of construct system development, namely differentiation, construct abstractness, and impression integration. Existing research on impression formation during interaction shows that the frequency of dispositional constructs on the RCQ clearly discriminates between low differentiated and high differentiated perceivers. A review of studies of impression formation in face-to-face interaction concludes that the RCQ contents consist primarily of the recall of previous construal activity. Numerous studies have examined the factors which affect the quantity and content of impressions. Studies have also shown that differentiation is typically associated with an intimacy motivation. Because it is likely that there are functionally different forms of interpersonal differentiation, careful attention should be given to both the description task in its social context and the actual content of the situated impressions. Future studies should examine construct system content as well as construct system structure. (Contains 52 references.) (RS)

MAKING SENSE OF THE ROLE CATEGORY QUESTIONNAIRE

Greg Leichty
Department of Communication
University of Louisville
Louisville, KY 40292

Tel. (502) 852-8175
Fax. (502) 852-8166
e-mail: gbleic01@Homer.Louisville.edu

Paper presented at the Southern States Communication Association Convention, April 1997.

MAKING SENSE OF THE ROLE CATEGORY QUESTIONNAIRE

This paper undertakes a critical reanalysis Crockett's (1965) Role Category Questionnaire (RCQ). One of the chief problems constructivists face is that it is still unclear what RCQ measures of interpersonal differentiation and abstractness actually tap. Among the constructivists, at least four different explanations have been advanced (Buleson, 1987; Burleson & Waltman, 1988). The "orthodox" interpretation holds that the RCQ constitutes a representative sample of the constructs available for construing others. Crockett (1965) recognized it would be impossible to get at all of the interpersonal constructs that a person has, but he noted that "If this sample represents the total number of constructs in about the same proportion for all subjects, the rank ordering of subjects on the basis of the number of constructs they use in standard situations should approximate the rank that would be obtained if the actual degree of differentiation of every subject were determinable (p. 50)."

In their review of cognitive complexity measures, O'Keefe and Sypher (1981) concluded that Crockett's measure of interpersonal differentiation had the most merit of all of the measures of complexity they reviewed. Specifically, they noted that it had high test-retest reliability among adults, independence from intelligence and verbal abilities, a positive correlation with age across childhood and adolescence, an association with other measures of social cognition, and association with measures of advanced communication. They noted, however, that the specific role played by interpersonal differentiation in generating person-centered communication was not entirely clear.

O'Keefe and Delia (1982) subsequently challenged the sampling explanation of the RCQ saying that it has an assimilationist bias: it assumes that the construct system exists as an organized unitary system and fails to give an account of how the application of constructs must accommodate perceptual inconsistencies. O'Keefe and Delia went on to propose that cognitive differentiation measured either the (1) number of accessible dispositional constructs, or (2) it tapped the degree to which one's constructs were organized by higher level organizing schema. According to the second account, some people are able to recall more information from memory because their beliefs about people are more interconnected and accessing one item about a person also increases the likelihood of retrieving other items as well.

Following one of the few longitudinal investigations of investigations of impression formation, O'Keefe (1984) noted that the output in the RCQ reflects the output from a variety of interpretive subsystems, many of which are applicable to particular tasks or social contexts. O'Keefe analyzed the evolution of impressions of among members of task groups in a class. She noted that while first impressions tended to be dominated by "character analytic constructs", the number of these constructs declined over time and the number of task relevant constructs tended to increase (e.g. effective discussion leader). She concluded that the RCQ score of differentiation usually indexes this subsystem of "character analytic" constructs which are primarily functional for decisions about relationships. She further concluded that it is this subsystem of constructs that enabled perceivers to form impressions of people that are relatively stable across time and situations.

At this time, there is still a lack of consensus as to what the RCQ typically measures. Burleson and Waltman (1988) concluded that of the four explanations forwarded by constructivists, the sampling explanation seemed to have as much support as the three alternatives. However, the review of literature for this paper suggests that it is time to shift from seeing RCQ based differentiation as a representation to viewing it as a measure of process. The RCQ typically indexes the extent to which perceivers routinely engage in "deep processing" of information about other persons: how much on-line processing a person typically does in understanding other people with whom they are interacting.

This paper primarily focuses on how RCQ differentiation scores for adults should be interpreted. Burleson and Waltman (1988) argue that the accessibility argument ignores the fact that the interpersonal construct system becomes progressively more differentiated during the course of childhood and adolescence. While the sampling argument may have some validity across childhood, even here, there is a large body of research that suggests that dispositional construing increases at about the time that children discover that dispositions not only describe behavior but are permanent aspects of a person's personality. As Rholes, Newman and Rhuble (1990) document, this discovery leads to dramatic changes in the meaning social information about self and other.

As such, RCQ scores are more about motivation than they are about structure. I accept O'Keefe's (1984) observation that RCQ cognitive differentiation usually accesses one subsystem of constructs-the

character analytic subsystem. People make other judgments about persons, but the typical RCQ task primarily indexes this domain. I also accept the proposition that differentiated persons beliefs tend to be more well organized but this is as a result of the work they have done to achieve a satisfying understanding of the other person. Likewise, these dispositional constructs are more accessible because they are used more frequently and more recently, as these are the most important determinants of construct accessibility (Bargh, 1990).

I believe a process/motivational explanation incorporates the core insights of each of the alternate positions and simultaneously explains the relationship between several RCQ measures of construct system development, namely differentiation, construct abstractness and impression integration. An impression of a person is often differentiated because a perceiver has attempted to work out an understanding of a person that resolves seeming inconsistencies between behavior. Similarly, RCQ measures of construct abstractness represent the degree to which core character analytic constructs have been put to work. The paper also discusses the conditions under which the meaning of RCQ scores can change as a function of task instructions, the kind of target described, and the social context.

Differentiation Measures Dispositional Construing.

Upon coding a couple of RCQs for differentiation, it quickly becomes apparent that impressions are made up of diverse elements. You get descriptions of physical appearance, the roles the person plays, their behaviors and their traits. There is also material connected to the person that connect the perceiver to the perceived such as behavioral reactions (I e.g. try to avoid him), to affective reactions (e.g. He makes my flesh crawl), reports of one's relationships to the person (e.g. a sworn enemy of mine) and reports of general social standing. All of these different elements are represented and linked to the target person in memory. I have recently found Carlston's (1992) associated systems theory to be helpful in helping organize my thinking about the elements that are in the RCQ and how these elements are interconnected.

When looks at the overall content of impressions by category, however, one is impressed by the overwhelming importance given to traits. In a study of situated impression formation in a small group,

Park (1986) found that traits accounted for nearly two-thirds of the impression content followed by behaviors (23%), physical characteristics (6%), attitudes and beliefs (3%), and demographic and role information (3%). She reports further that the frequency of trait information tended to increase in impressions over time, while the frequency of behaviors tended to decrease. The frequency of trait-related information in impressions has been replicated by several other longitudinal studies of impression formation as well. The prevalence of trait information in written or verbal descriptions of others is predicted by Carlston's associated systems model because trait information is most directly connected to the linguistic output. Other forms of information about the person such as visual representations or affective reactions have to be translated and encoded to make it into a written or verbal impression. Following Carlston (1992), the RCQ rather selectively accesses person information in memory, namely it over-represents trait information.

The existing research on impression formation during interaction shows that the frequency of dispositional constructs in the RCQ clearly discriminates between low differentiated and high differentiated perceivers. Delia, Clark and Switzer (1974) content analyzed an impression which persons wrote about a target after a 10 minute informal interaction. They coded the impressions for physical traits, behaviors, social roles, beliefs and attitudes and dispositional constructs. They found that high and low differentiated perceivers differed in how frequently they used abstract dispositional constructs. Highly differentiated perceivers used two and a half times as many dispositional constructs as less differentiated perceivers. In all of the other content categories, construct frequency was virtually the same between the low and high differentiated individuals. Although differentiation is made up of different outputs, in adults at least, it primarily indexes variations in the number of dispositional constructs used to describe others.

Differentiation Reflects Online Construing

The Role Category Questionnaire ordinarily contains the "output" of on-line construal processes which are encoded, stored in long-term memory and later retrieved. Current research in person-perception distinguishes between on-line construal-applying constructs and making inferences while in the

presence of the other person, and memory based construing, where the person recalls material from memory-usually episodic memory and makes judgments from there (Bassili, 1989). On-line construal results in storing the judgment in memory somewhat independent of the visual and behavioral representations on which it is based. As a result, judgments which were made on-line often show little evaluative consistency with memory for behaviors etc., while judgments made on information retrieved from memory are directly influenced by what can be recalled (Hastie & Pennington, 1989).

I will also discuss how the contents of the RCQ can be made to access memory based construing by changing the incentives or instruction set in the administration of the RCQ. However, my review of studies of impression formation in face-to-face interaction, lead me to the conclusion that the RCQ contents consist primarily of the recall of previous construal activity. I note first of all that persons who are high on construct differentiation, spontaneously form more differentiated and integrated impressions of individuals in informal interaction (Applegate, 1982, Brooks & Neimeyer, 1987; Delia, Clark & Switzer, 1974; O'Keefe, 1984; O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1989). These studies had persons write impressions immediately following face-to-face interaction. The lack of time in between the on-line construing and the impression task effectively eliminates the kind of memory based rumination which might add significantly to the judgments stored in memory. Furthermore, the correlation between the person's differentiation scores and the differentiation score of their spontaneously formed impressions tends to be quite robust. It seems likely that the RCQ, as ordinarily administered, taps on-line cognitive processes.

This conclusion is further bolstered by research by Park (1986, 1989). In a longitudinal study of impression formation in a group setting over a seven week period, Park found that information that appeared in respondent's first impressions continued to be repeated in the later impressions. Although new information was added to impressions at each stage, the majority of attributes ever used to describe a target appeared in the first impression. The reaction-time measures also revealed faster responses to items previously used in the written protocols to describe a target with faster reaction times as a function of the number of times that an item had appeared in the seven written impressions. The combination of the longitudinal content comparisons and the reaction time measures confirm that the content of written

impressions primarily consists of content stored in memory as a result of on-line encoding during social interaction.

Park (1989) also presents evidence that traits serve as on-line organizers: that is, traits serve to organize behaviors in memory and thereby facilitate later speed of recall for those items. One of the most replicated effects in memory research is something called the "fan effect". Ordinarily, when a person is given a number of unrelated items to memorize about an object, the amount of time required to recall any single items increases as a function of the number of items in the recall set increases. You give me three unrelated facts about Henry and seven unrelated facts about Charlie, and it will take me longer to remember any single item of information about Charlie. However, when information can be organized schematically under a trait prototype, a negative fan effect occurs. This means that reaction time judgments about items are made more quickly rather than more slowly as a function of set size. Park presents convincing evidence that shows that traits serve as on-line organizers.

Park argues that traits may initially be activated and connected to only a few behaviors. However, the behavior-trait connection serves as a hypothesis for predicting further behavior. If the predictions are confirmed by new behaviors, they are also organized by the trait and the trait-behavior connection becomes stronger. As the trait becomes linked to more behaviors, it becomes even more accessible in memory. It appears that differentiated individuals create more elaborated impressions because they make more connections between behaviors and traits in on-line construing. They form and test more hypotheses using trait concepts and simultaneously represent more information about the person in memory. They not only apply more traits to behaviors, but also likely have more behaviors linked to each trait, thereby giving them stronger hypotheses or beliefs about the target person. This could explain why differentiated perceivers are often less susceptible to recency effects when they encounter new information which is inconsistent in some respect with the information they have received previously (e.g. Crockett, 1965).

If I were to ask why differentiated individuals spontaneously make more of these connections in on-line processing, two factors probably operate simultaneously. The first is that the dispositional constructs of differentiated perceivers are more accessible in memory and are more likely to be activated

and used. In part, they are more accessible because they have been used more frequently and more recently (Bargh et al, 1986). It is also possible that the frequency with which dispositional constructs are used leads then to be applied more efficiently as a function of the practice effect (Smith, 1989). Given that on-line judgments are often made under information overload in real time, differentiated perceivers may simply make more behavior-trait inferences in the same amount of time than do less differentiated perceivers. I suspect that both of these factors may be at work. In particular, construct accessibility is probably linked to individual differences in motivation.

Factors Which Affect the Quantity and Content of Impressions.

There are a number of factors which can affect the degree of differentiation and abstractness in written impressions. By extension, there are also several paths to differentiated and abstract social cognitions (Woike & Aronoff, 1992). Characteristics of the target, or one's relationship with the target, provide several factors which can and do influence RCQ differentiation scores. The frequency with which one interacts with the describe person is one such variable. In analysis of an early eight role RCQ, Supnick (reported in Crockett, 1965) found that 1) descriptions of liked peers were more differentiated than disliked peers, 2) descriptions of peers were more differentiated than descriptions of older persons, 3) that same sex liked peers were more differentiated than opposite sex friends, and 4) same-sex disliked peers were more differentiated than opposite-sex disliked peers. Crockett (1965) noted that all of these differences could be parsimoniously explained by frequency of interaction. In other words, persons form more differentiated impressions with others with whom they interact more frequently. Studies using descriptions of co-workers also sometimes obtain differentiation scores (Leichty, Willihnganz & Hart, 1994, Meyer & Sypher, 1993) which are considerably below the means usually reported among college students (Allen et al. 1990). In each case, the people who were described with greater differentiation were also the people who the person is likely to interact with more frequently.

High differentiated people may interact more frequently with the people they describe than low differentiated individuals do with the people that they describe. However, several studies show that differentiated perceivers form more elaborated impressions of a target after only one exposure than less

differentiated perceivers do (Delia, Clark, & Switzer, 1979; Applegate, 1982). Persons may also describe liked peers differently because their relationship with the described person is qualitatively different. If one's relationship with another is characterized by greater self-disclosure, one should have more material to draw construals from. Indeed there is some evidence that this is the case (Gibbons & Bradac, 1987; Leichty, 1989).

The cognitive differentiation and behaviors of the person of the person being described can also affect the differentiation of the person being described. Several studies that persons produce more integrated and differentiated impressions when the person they are describing is differentiated or engages in seemingly contradictory behaviors (O'Keefe & Shepherd, 1989; Samter, Burleson & Basden-Murphy, 1989). These effects are rather small and seem to be most likely to happen when the perceiver is already differentiated and/or the people in the dyad have similar differentiation scores, but could be significant insofar as that people who are long-time friends tend to have similar types of constructs and similar communication profiles (Duck, 1973; Leichty, 1989).

It also appears that there a number of motivational factors which can affect differentiation scores on the RCQ. Several of these merely have methodological implications, while several others go to the heart of my understanding of interpersonal differentiation. In the methodological sector, several longitudinal studies show that differentiation scores tend to decline over multiple administrations of the RCQ (Brooks & Neimeyer, 1987; Park, 1986; O'Keefe, 1984). This probably reflects a task fatigue or lower motivation to fill out the later instruments. Hence, it seems unwise to directly compare differentiation scores over time later scores probably reflect this methodological artifact in the absolute number of constructs (although the relative number of constructs remain highly correlated). However, there are no known studies which have tried to make such comparisons thus far, so the point is largely a moot one.

There is also a line of research which has tried to show that the RCQ measure of differentiation is primarily a function of "loquacity" or motivation to write (Allen et al., 1990; Allen, Burell & Kellerman, 1993; Beatty & Payne, 1985; Powers, Jordan and Street, 1979). Beatty and Payne (1985) offered extra-credit to an experimental group if they "took the RCQ task seriously" and found higher scores in the

experimental group than in the control group. Similarly, Allen et al. (1990) instructed students "write down at least 40 characteristics" in their written impressions as opposed to the usual instructions to "Write down as many defining characteristics as you can." They found that respondents produced more than twice as many constructs as are typically found under the typical format.

Such studies do pose a problem of sorts to the "sampling version" of the RCQ: motivation and demand characteristics clearly do alter the output in written impressions. However, since I believe that differentiation is associated with motivation, I think that the primary cautions to be drawn from these studies are methodological in nature. I believe that to provide an incentive or to provide instructions to come up with at least 40 descriptors significantly changes the nature of the person impression task. Specifically, as previously discussed, it changes the task from recalling on-line judgments which have been stored in memory to asking respondents to recall behavioral material from memory and to compute new judgments.

The distinction between on-line processing and memory-based processing is a central one in the social cognition literature (Hastie & Pennington, 1989). I hypothesize that this causes people to first recover beliefs about the person already stored in memory, and to then compute new beliefs and traits about the person from any episodic memories that they can recover about the person. In published studies using the standard instructions with student populations, differentiation means and standard deviations from study to study fall within restricted range (displayed in Allen et al, 1990). The range of output with loquacity, because there is no reason to think that loquacity should be related in predictable ways to person-centered communication or to other measures of social-cognition (Burleson, Applegate & Delia, 1991; O'Keefe & Sypher, 1981).

One future study, which might be informative, would be to provide an instruction set or incentive for individuals to be very attentive to the behavior of another person in a face-to face interaction and to then compare the content and quantity of impression information with a control group which had not been given such an incentive or instruction set. One could then test whether the experimental manipulation significantly changed the content and amount of differentiation for low and high differentiated perceivers with a short timed version of the RCQ. I suspect that the experimental

manipulation will reduce but not entirely eliminate the usual differences between the two groups because of on-line processing limitations associated with practice effects of making judgments with particular categories of constructs (Smith, 1989).

I do think that deep construal and motivation are spontaneously tied together in how one's most accessible constructs spontaneously activate configurations of goals in given situations which in turn guide person construal in subsequent interaction. The connection between social goals and dispositional construal is illustrated by research which shows that children increase their rate of dispositional construal of behavioral information about a target person when they think they will subsequently meet and interact with the person (Rholes, Newman & Ruble, 1990). There is also a considerable amount of research which shows that both chronically accessible and recently primed constructs are more likely to be applied to perceptual events than less accessible but equally appropriate constructs (e.g. Barge et al. 1986). When there is a reasonable fit between a situation and a relevant accessible construct, the construct is applied, the associated goal is activated and other constructs related to the goal are activated for on-line construal. I believe highly differentiated individuals are more likely to pursue multiple goals in their messages (O'Keefe & Delia, 1982) because they have chronically accessible constructs related to these goals which are thus activated and pursued simultaneously.

A recent study by Woike and Aronoff (1992) shows task characteristics and a person's chronic motivations affect subsequent social construal. Woike and Aronoff hypothesized that individuals process information at deeper levels when the tasks a situation offers are congruent with their motivational dispositions. They had power and intimacy motivated individuals view a videotape of 2 job candidates involved in a peer interview. Study participants were then given a description of a job which emphasized either power or intimacy components of a job prior to viewing the videotape. After they finished watching the videotape, subjects wrote a free-response impression of the person in the tape that they thought was best suited for the job. They were asked to indicate what qualities and behaviors led them to believe that this person was best for the job.

The written impressions were then coded for total complexity, simple complexity, elaborated complexity, simple integration and elaborated integration. Consistent with their predictions, they found

significant Motive by situation interactions on total complexity, elaborated complexity and elaborated integration. The power motivated people produced more differentiated and integrated impressions in the power motive relevant task than in the intimacy motive relevant task. Similarly, intimacy motivated individuals produced more elaborated and integrated impressions in the intimacy motive relevant task than in the power relevant motive task. In addition, there was also significantly greater number of words in the written impression when the task was relevant to the chronic motives of the individual, but the word count was only marginally correlated with elaborated integration and elaborated integration. High motivation did produce more words in the written output but mainly it increased complex construing.

Woike and Aronoff's (1992) findings have several important implications for the present discussion. First they demonstrate a compelling connection between motivation and complex construal. The study also shows that complex construal is most likely when there is a general congruence between a person's constructs/goals and the situational structure. If a situation looks like it provides opportunities relevant to one's characteristic goals, the relevant construal processes kick in. Finally, the most important implication of the study is that there are different roads to impression differentiation and integration. Different social goals and related constructs can be mobilized to produce complex social cognitions if the situational parameters are favorable. Since RCQ scores of differentiation have consistently been associated with person-centered communication, this leads to the question of just what kind of motivation the RCQ task is usually associated with.

Differentiation Is Typically Associated With an Intimacy Motivation.

I believe that at least among adults, the RCQ differentiation score of the two-role RCQ ordinarily taps construal processes associated with consistent motivational forces. Specifically, I believe that the RCQ taps construal processes linked to intimacy motivation. McAdams (1985) describes intimacy motivation as a "recurrent preference or readiness for interpersonal experiences of warmth, closeness and communication (p. 92)." I note that this interpretation is consistent with the earliest work with the RCQ (Crockett, 1965), and by O'Keefe's (1984) observation that variance in RCQ scores primarily consists of

the frequency with which "character analytic" constructs are used: constructs used to make judgments about the potential for forming friendships with others.

The two-role RCQ ordinarily asks a person to describe a liked peer and a disliked peer. The liked peer who is described is usually called a close friend. Close friendships are voluntary relationships which are typically oriented around mutual respect, liking, and equality (Rawlins, 1992). I propose that these are the very types of qualities in other people that high intimacy motivated individuals are likely to process more deeply. Even in the case of the disliked peer description, a high intimacy motivation would might also orient individuals towards persons who can hurt you and who are to be avoided (Fiske, 1992). Following Woike and Aronoff's findings, I would expect that high intimacy motivated individuals would produce more differentiated and elaborated impressions of friends and rejected friends than persons high in other motivations such as achievement or power.

There are a variety of indicators that this may be the case. First a number of studies have looked to see if there are correlations between construct system qualities and Machiavellianism. High Machiavellians tend to be interpersonally detached, calculating and orienting toward manipulating others' feelings and needs to meet their own ends. Low Machiavellians are more interpersonally involved, and more sensitive to the emotions and needs of others (Christie & Geiss, 1970). Therefore, low Machiavellianism is a likely proxy variable for a high intimacy motivation. In three samples, construct system indices have been significantly and negatively correlated with Machiavellianism (Delia & O'Keefe, 1976; Kline, 1984). Although Sypher et al (1981) found no relationship between these constructs, significant variations of the intimacy motivation ranges from one sample to another may occasionally attenuate this relationship.

Another line of evidence for the intimacy motivation hypothesis comes from a number of studies which have coded the rationales that respondents give for the messages that they construct (e.g. Applegate, 1982, Applegate & Woods, 1991). In these studies, highly differentiated and abstract perceivers routinely indicate that they designed their messages to preserve or enhance a positive interpersonal relationship with the message target. The spontaneous inclusion of face and relationship goals as important subsidiary goals in conjunction with instrumental goals such as persuasion or

compliance gaining is a common feature in the constructivist literature. This spontaneous concern seems consistent with an intimacy motivation interpretation of the RCQ.

There are also several studies of friendship that are consistent with an intimacy motivation. First, there is a tendency for persons to use more abstract dispositional constructs in construing someone they like or a relationship moving towards greater intimacy (Brooks & Neimeyer, 1987). Construct differentiation and abstractness are also associated with higher levels of self-disclosure and solidarity among same sex friends (Gibbons & Bradac, 1987), and a greater preference for greater affectively oriented communication skills in friends (Burleson & Samter, 1990). In addition, Leichty (1989) found that LCD individuals stressed the importance of enjoying shared activities together in same sex friendships, whereas highly differentiated individuals emphasized the importance of self-disclosure and emotional expression as the hallmarks of their friendships. Highly differentiated individuals in this study also indicated that they desired for these friendships to proceed towards greater intimacy ($r=.35$, $p<.05$).

I recently used another avenue to test the intimacy motivation hypothesis in an organization setting. I participated in an organizational audit for a small manufacturing company (120 employees) which has prided itself for its "family atmosphere". In interviews gathered by the research team, there was ample evidence that the company placed a great value on maintaining a good socio-emotional working environment among management and workers. I reasoned that the corporate culture and work environment would be especially attractive to high intimacy motivated individuals, and that high intimacy oriented individuals would tend to provide more elaborated impressions in this kind of company. Based on this reasoning I believed that high differentiated individuals would likely give attention and weight to items indexing the quality of workgroup and interdepartmental relationships in the company. Specifically, construct differentiation would serve as an important moderator variable, such that these items would be strongly predictive of communication satisfaction, job satisfaction and organizational loyalty for high differentiated individuals but not low differentiated individuals.

In a preliminary analysis I found evidence for the predicted interaction in the assessments of workgroup relationships, but not intergroup relationships. I found that quality of workgroup relationships was strongly predictive of each of the outcome variables for high differentiated individuals

but not low differentiated individuals. Workgroup relational quality was correlated with communication satisfaction differentiated individuals (r=.57), but not for low differentiated individuals (r=.04). The individual items for which cognitive differentiation served as the strongest moderator included items such as "My co-workers are sympathetic to my person problems.", and "I look forward to being with members of my workgroup each day." Parallel results were found for job satisfaction and organization loyalty. Differentiated individuals also were more aware of communication problems and less satisfied with communication overall than their less differentiated counterparts. In short, differentiated individuals pay attention to rather different aspects of their social environments than their less differentiated cohorts.

The overall pattern of the results discussed above is consistent with the proposition that the RCQ measure of interpersonal differentiation indexes social construal processes accompanying an intimacy motivation. The next obvious research project is to test this idea directly using McAdams measures and methodology (McAdams, 1985). However, I do not equate RCQ differentiation as a measure of intimacy related motivation. Rather I assume that specific social motives or chronic goal orientations (Srull & Wyer, 1986) require the use of relevant interpretive schemes and communication strategies. I believe that interpersonal differentiation is consistently associated with person-centered communication, because they are part of a triadic complex involving characteristic patterns of intimacy motivation, person-centered construal and person-centered communication. Different complexes represent different social pragmatics-ways of social being.

I would add at this point that there is likely to be a deep connection between one's social network and the accessibility of chronic goal relevant constructs. Persons actively seek and select situations and social associations which enable them to enact their preferred modes of sociality (social cognition and communication). Moreover, interaction and communication with other persons in one's social network repeatedly activate and utilized these same constructs and affiliated goals. Hence when individuals find a compatible social niche they likely have a powerful effect on priming the construal processes of significant others in the situation, even while their own social cognitions and communication are crucially affected by others.

When Differentiation is Not Likely Related to An Intimacy Motivation

Some may object that an intimacy motivation interpretation of the RCQ is inconsistent with my earlier observation that there are likely multiple routes to complex social cognitions (Woike & Aronoff, 1992). I hasten to add that I believe that the two-role RCQ procedure ordinarily taps social construal processes associated with an intimacy motivation. Changes in description tasks and social contexts of person description may indeed activate other routes to "cognitive differentiation". RCQ differentiation scores may "mean" rather different things in different contexts. Because it is likely that there are functionally different forms of interpersonal differentiation, careful attention should be given to both the description task in its social context and the actual content of the situated impressions.

In some situations, RCQ output will reflect schemas other than "intimacy" related ones. Descriptions of co-workers is one likely area in which this will occur. I believe that the content of such descriptions will likely be strongly influenced by the prevailing organizational culture (Meyer & Sypher, 1993). Companies with a well developed career track apparently leads to co-worker descriptions which are dominated by "influence" constructs (Sypher & Zorn, 1988). In these cases I believe that organizational cultures are likely to serve as selection mechanisms for the type of person interpretive schemas that are characteristic in those settings (Douglas, 1986; Everett, 1994). Persons who are attuned to the important dimensions of the work environment as defined by organizational culture, are the persons most likely to function well in that setting.

The content of interpersonal construal likely becomes accommodated to social environments by a number of mechanisms such as recruitment, socialization, adaptation and attrition. Constructs which have little functional value in a particular setting should be used less over time, while constructs with functional value should increase in the frequency of their usage (Applegate et al., 1989; Fiske, 1992; O'Keefe, 1984). Consistent with a social constructivist position, I argue that both the social context and the individual play active co-determining roles in the allocation of interpretation. I suggest that to the extent they are able, individuals *actively select and make social worlds* that are compatible with their

own goals, social-cognitive interpretive schemes and communication preferences. By the same token, they also accommodate to the necessary social exigencies of other people who are doing the same.

Based on these considerations, I believe that it is not enough to simply count the number of unique descriptors in impressions. Instead, I recommend the development of content sensitive schemes. It would be most useful if such content analytic schemes are informed by relevant theory concerning the structure and processes of person representation (e.g., Carlston, 1992), especially concerning the different types of dispositional constructs and the unique features of each (Reeder, 1993). Further work tying construct content to different social motives should be particularly useful in the future.

Conclusion

There is a need to nail down what the RCQ typically measures. A lack of clarity on this point hinders further theoretical development. I have offered several hypotheses which I think deserve further exploration. This will involve new data collection, but for now I advocate that some work should be directed toward reworking previously published data sets with revised coding schemes for the RCQ. Future studies should examine construct system content as well as construct system structure. The practice of simply counting constructs is of limited utility. Construct content and content structure are ultimately not as separable current uses of the RCQ imply.

REFERENCES

Allen, M., Mabry, E.A., Banski, M., Stoneman, M. & Carter, P. (1990). A thoughtful appraisal of measuring cognition using the role category questionnaire. *Communication Reports, 3*, 49-57.

Allen, M., Burrell, N., & Kellerman, K. (1993). The comparison of observer and actor coding of the role category questionnaire. In *Communication Reports, 6,* 1-7.

Applegate, J.L. (1982). The impact of construct system development on communication and impression formation within persuasive contexts. *Communication Monographs, 46*, 231-240.

Applegate, J., Coyle, C., Hart, J.H. & Church, S. M. (1989). Interpersonal constructs and communicative ability in a police environment: A preliminary investigation. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology, 2*, 385-400.

Applegate, J. L. & Woods, E. (1991). Construct system development and attention to face wants in persuasive situations. *Southern Communication Journal, 56*, 194-204.

Barge, J.A. (1990). Auto-motives: Preconscious determinants of social interaction. In E.T. Higgins & R.M. Sorrentino (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior (Vol. 2)* (pp. 93-130). New York: Guilford.

Barge, J.A., Bond, R.N., Lombardi, W.J., & Tota, M.E. (1986). The additive nature of chronic and temporary sources of construct accessibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50,* 869-878.

Bassili, J. N. (1989). Traits as action categories versus traits as person attributes in social cognition. In John Bassili (Ed.), *On-line cognition in person perception* (pp. 61-90).

Beatty, M.J. & Payne, S.K. (1985). Loquacity and quantity of constructs as predictors of social perspective-taking. *Communication Quarterly, 32*, 207-210.

Brooks, D. L. & Neimeyer, R. A. (1987, August). Impression formation in the acquaintance process. Paper presented at the Seventh International Congress on Personal Construct Psychology , Memphis.

Burleson, B.R. (1987). Cognitive complexity. In J. McCroskey & J. Daly (Eds.), *Personality and interpersonal communication* (pp. 305-349). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Burleson, B. R., Applegate, J. L. & Delia, J. G. (1991). On validly assessing the validity of the role category questionnaire: A reply to Allen et al. *Communication Reports, 4* (2), 113-119.

Burleson, B.R. & Samter, W. (1990). Effects of cognitive complexity on the perceived importance of communication skills in friends. *Communication Research, 1, 165-182.*

Burleson, B.R., & Waltman, M.S. (1988). Cognitive complexity: Using the Role Category Questionnaire measure. In C.H. Tardy (Ed.), *A Handbook for the study of human communication: Methods and instruments for observing, measuring and assessing communication processes* (pp. 1-35). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Carlston, D. E. (1992). Impression formation and the modular mind: The associated systems theory. In L. L. Martin & A. Tesser (Eds.), *The construction of social judgments* (pp. 301-341). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Christie, R., & Geis, F. L. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism.* New York: Academic Press.

Crockett, W.H. (1965). Cognitive complexity and impression formation. In B.A. Maher (Ed.), *Progress in experimental personality research* (Vol. 2). New York: Academic press.

Delia, J. G., Clark, R.A. & Switzer, D. E. (1974). Cognitive complexity and impression formation in informal social interaction. *Speech Monographs, 46,* 274-281.

Delia, J. G., Clark, R.A. & Switzer, D. E. (1979). Cognitive The content of informal conversations as a function of interactants' interpersonal cognitive complexity. *Communication Monographs, 46,* 274-281.

Delia, J.G. & O'Keefe, B.J. (1976). The interpersonal constructs of Machiavellians. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 15,* 435-436.

Douglas, M. (1986). *How institutions think.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Duck, S.W. (1973). *Personal relationships and personal constructs: A study of friendship formation*. London: Wiley.

Everett, J. L. (1994). Communication and sociocultural evolution in organizations and organizational populations. *Communication Theory, 4*, 93-111.

Fiske, S. T. (1992). Thinking is for doing: Portraits of social cognition from daguerreotype to laserphoto. *Journal of Personality* and Social Psychology, *63*, 877-899.

Gibbons, P. & Bradac, J. (1987, May). Cognitive complexity and construct system similarity in friendship formation. Paper presented to International Communication Association annual meeting, Montreal.

Hastie, R. & Pennington, N. (1989). Notes on the distinction between memory-based versus on-line judgments. In John N. Bassili (Ed.), *On-line cognition in person perception* (pp. 1-18). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kline, S. L. (1984). Individual differences in the accomplishment of face support in persuasive communication. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Leichty, (1989). Interpersonal constructs and friendship form and structure. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology, 2*, 401-416.

Leichty, G., Willihnganz, S., & Hart, G. (1994, May). Factors affecting friendship choice at work. Paper presented to the Iowa Conference on Social and Personal Relationships, Iowa City.

McAdams, D. P. (1985). Friendship and motivation. In Steve Duck and Daniel Perlman (Eds), *Understanding personal relationships: An interdisciplinary approach* (pp. 85-106). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Meyer, J. & Sypher, S. (1993). Personal constructs as indicators of cultural values . *Southern Communication Journal, 58*, 227-238.

O'Keefe, B.J. & Delia, J.G. (1982). Impression formation and message production. In M.E. Roloff & C. R. Berger (Eds), *Social cognition and communication*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

O'Keefe, B.J., & Shepherd, G.J. (1989). The communication of identity during face-to face persuasive interactions: Effects of construct differentiation and target's message strategies. *Communication Research, 16*, 375-404.

O'Keefe, D.J. & Sypher, H. E. (1981). Cognitive complexity measures and the relationship of cognitive complexity to communication. *Human Communication Research, 8*, 72-92.

Park, B. (1986). A method for studying the development of impressions of real people. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 907-917.

Park, B. (1989) Trait attributes as on-line organizers in person impressions. In John N. Bassili (Ed.), *On-line cognition in person perception* (pp. 19-38). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Powers, W.G., Jordan, W.J., & Street, R. L. (1979). Indices in the measurement of cognitive complexity: Is complexity loquacity? *Human Communication Research, 6*, 69-73.

Rawlins, W. K. (1992). *Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics and the life course*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

Reader, G. D. (1993). Trait-behavior relations and dispositional inference. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 19*, 586-593.

Rholes, W. S., Newman, L. S. & Ruble, D. N. (1990). Understanding self and other: Developmental and motivational aspects of perceiving persons in terms of perceiving persons in terms of invariant dispositions. In E.T. Higgins and R.M. Sorrentino (Eds), *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition* (Vol. 2) (pp. 369-407). New York: Guilford Press.

Sampter, W., Burleson, B. R. & Basden-Murphy, L. (1989). Behavioral complexity is in the eye of the beholder: Effects of cognitive complexity and message complexity on impressions of the source of comforting messages. *Human Communication Research, 15*, 612-629.

Smith, E. R. (1989) Procedural efficiency and on-line social judgments. In John N. Bassili (Ed.), *On-line cognition in person perception* (pp. 19-38). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Srull, T. K. & Wyer, R. S. (1986). The role of chronic and temporary goals in social information processing. In R.M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Ed.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: Foundations of social behavior* (Vol. 1, pp. 503-549). New York: Guilford.

Sypher, B., & Zorn, T. (1988). Individual differences and construct system content in descriptions of liked and disliked co-workers. *International Journal of Personal Construct Psychology, 1*, 37-51.y

Sypher, H.E., & Nightengale, J., Vielhaber, M., & Sypher, B.D. (1981). The interpersonal constructs of Machiavellians: A reconsideration. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 20*, 155-156.

Woike, B., & Aronoff, J. (1992). Antecedents of complex social cognitions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 97-104.

CE 075552

Would you like to put your paper in ERIC? Please send us a clean, dark copy!

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

ERIC®

REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Paper presented at the 1997 SSCA Convention (Savannah)
Making Sense of the Role Category Questionnaire

Author(s): Greg Leichty

Corporate Source:

Publication Date: April 2-6, 1997

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic/optical media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 1** documents	The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all **Level 2** documents	
☒ Check here **For Level 1 Release:** Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) *and* paper copy.	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Sample TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)	☐ Check here **For Level 2 Release:** Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but *not* in paper copy.
	Level 1	**Level 2**	

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at **Level 1**.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign here→ please

Signature: Greg Leichty

Printed Name/Position/Title: Greg Leichty / Associate Professor

Organization/Address: 310 Strickler Hall, Department of Communication, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292

Telephone: (502) 852-8175

FAX: (502) 852-8166

E-Mail Address: GBLEIc01@homer.louisville.edu

Date: 09/04/97

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor:
Address:
Price:

IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

Name:
Address:

V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse: Acquisitions

ERIC/REC
2805 E. Tenth Street
Smith Research Center, 150
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

~~ERIC Processing and Reference Facility~~
~~1100 West Street, 2d Floor~~
~~Laurel, Maryland 20707-3598~~

~~Telephone: 301-497-4080~~
~~Toll Free: 800-799-3742~~
~~FAX: 301-953-0263~~
~~e-mail: ericfac@inet.ed.gov~~
~~WWW: http://ericfac.piccard.csc.com~~

/96)