

Relational Interaction Coding System

This category system attempts to measure relational interaction. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967) posit two axioms about the content and relationship levels of communication, and complementary and symmetrical interaction. Consistent with these two axioms, the category system is designed to transform verbal content into relational definitions. After identifying a speaker, the category system codes the unit of analysis into grammatical format and how the unit relates to the previous comment. Based on this coding, each unit of analysis is transformed into an "up" (↑), a "down" (↓), or an across (→). These codings refer to attempts at either relational authority, submission, or equality, respectively.

Example:

| | | |
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| Person A | 31 | "Where did you find that information?" |
| Person B | 11 | "I read it in <u>Time</u> magazine where it reported that the divorce rate in America was up 18 percent." |

This interaction would be coded 31 (question seeking informative extension) followed by 11 (assertion providing information extension). According to the transformation rules, this interact would be a ↓-/↑-. Seeking is a deferential relationship to a source of knowledge or authority. The '-' sign is an intensity measure indicating that this "down"/"up" relationship is not very extreme.

Seeking justification, on the other hand, is an attack on the previous comment and would be a 33 coded ↑+. And when someone provides this justification of the previous comment they are also striving to maintain an ↑ position. This 13 is coded ↑. The '-' indicates less intensity in the face of a challenge to justify your position.

DIMENSION I - Identify the speaker: 1-N.

DIMENSION II - Grammatical structure of the statement; format of the utterance.

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| 1. Declarative Assertion | a. | An explicit statement with a referent. |
| | b. | Does not explicitly seek a response. |
| 2. Imperative | a. | A command or instruction. |
| | b. | Refers more to what another person should do, than to |

the opinion or attitude of the speaker.

- c. Ex. "You must."
"It has to."

3. Question
- a. Interrogative in form.
 - b. Explicitly seeks a response.
 - c. Inquiry.
 - d. When a statement begins with an assertion and ends with a question, treat it as a question.
4. Incomplete
- a. Initiated but not a completed utterance.
 - b. Ex. "What I meant was . . ."
"Do you mean, ah . . ."

DIMENSION III - This dimension classifies each statement according to how the statement relates to the previous comment.

0. Nonextended
- a. An "I don't know" comment is nonextended and can only follow 31, 32, 33, or 34.
1. Informative Extension
- a. Continues the flow of the preceding message by providing (or seeking) information.
 - b. Either focuses or broadens by adding information not previously considered.
 - c. The inclusion of new information, by definition, lowers the level of abstraction.
 - d. Ex. "Pollution by autos is really a problem."
11 "Yes, figures show that most cars only have one or two people in them."
2. Elaborative Extension
- a. Does not change the level of abstraction.
 - b. Continues the theme of the preceding message.
 - c. Elaborates on the previous message.
 - d. Often takes the form of a digressive, personal experience.

- e. Can repeat, clarify, restate.
 - f. Ex. "Yea, I know what you mean. The same thing happened to me last year. . . ."
3. Justification
- a. Provides or seeks a warrant.
 - b. Statement of grounds or reasons for believing something.
 - c. Upholds or vindicates the previous statement.
 - d. Ex. "How is it that you can
33 believe such a thing?"
"I think he is right
31 because . . ."
 - e. Statement may also extend with information, but the purpose of the statement is to justify. The information is a warrant for the justification.
4. Simple Personal Support
- a. A simple or brief comment with no reason attached, which supports the person in the previous message.
 - b. Seeks or provides acceptance, confirmation, or approval of the individual.
 - c. Ex. "You really did a fine job."
"I like the way you relate to people."
 - d. May contain ideational support along with explicit reference to personal support.
5. Extended Personal Support
- a. Personal support with additional information.
 - b. Provides a reason.
 - c. Look for a "because" implication.
6. Ideational Support
- a. Supports the idea inherent in previous message.
 - b. Simple statement of approval for the subject matter under discussion.
 - c. Refers to ideas and data of various types.
 - d. Ex. "I agree." "Good idea."

7. Extended Ideational Support
- a. Statement that favors or advocates the idea in the previous message.
 - b. Provides reasons, data, evidence, warrants.
 - c. Look for a "because" implication.
8. Personal Nonsupport
- a. Disagrees with, rejects, disconfirms the previous message at the personal level.
 - b. Refers to the individual, i.e., his being, self-concept, etc.
 - c. Brief or simple comment.
 - d. Ex. "You're all screwed up."
"You're nuts."
 - e. A topic change can be a personal nonsupport when it is a way of relating to a specific response.
 - f. Ex. "What do you think of my idea."
"Let's do something else."
 - g. May contain nonsupport of ideational content if done in a manner which rejects the individual.
9. Extended Personal Nonsupport
- a. Same as personal support, but extended. Provides reasons.
 - b. Look for the "because" implication.
10. Ideational Nonsupport
- a. Disagreement, rejection of previous idea.
 - b. Relates to idea not the individual.
 - c. Ex. "I disagree."
11. Extended Ideational Nonsupport
- a. Disagrees with or rejects previous statement but provides evidence, data, etc. for doing so.
 - b. Look for a "because" implication.
 - c. Ex. "Well, I don't see it that way because . . ."

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| 12. Initiate New Direction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Topic change or establishment of new direction. b. Not personal disconfirmation if not a response to a request for response commonality. c. Ex. "Let's consider this issue." d. Can be stock-taking synthesis. e. A 312 is a message which seeks and initiates new direction. |
| 13. Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nonfluencies and incompletes. b. No definition of the relationship. c. Can only follow a four (4) in Dimension II. |

Some Coding Hints

For any comment ask yourself whether or not the comment is clearly a statement of support or nonsupport. If it is neither then you have eliminated eight (8) of the thirteen (13) categories. Since codes 12 (initiate new direction) and 13 (other) are rare and easier to identify, the only real decision is between categories 1, 2, or 3. Category 1 of Dimension II is the assertion of, or seeking new information. The question of new information is important because if a comment is a restatement or simply more of the same information, then the comment is coded 2 (elaborative extension). When someone provides an example it is coded 1, unless the example is a restatement or a second example to clear up an earlier one.

If you decide that a comment is either support or nonsupport, next ask whether or not it is ideational or personal. After answering this question, simply decide if the message is simple or extended. This process of elimination should facilitate the coding judgment.

Transformation Rules

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------------|---|-----|----|
| 10 | ↓- | Unless follows a 33, then | + | 31 | ↓- |
| 11 | ↑- | | | 32 | → |
| 12 | → | | | 33 | ↑+ |
| 13 | ↑+ | | | 34 | ↓+ |
| 14 | → | | | 35 | ↓+ |
| 15 | ↓+ | | | 36 | ↓- |
| 16 | → | | | 37 | ↓+ |
| 17 | ↓+ | | | 38 | ↑- |
| 18 | ↑+ | | | 39 | ↑+ |
| 19 | ↑+ | | | 310 | ↑- |
| 110 | ↑- | | | 311 | ↑+ |
| 111 | ↑- | | | 312 | ↓- |
| 112 | ↑+ | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|---------------------------|---|-----|---|
| 21 | ↑+ | | | 413 | → |
| 22 | → | | | | |
| 23 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 24 | → | If preceded by a 35, then | - | | |
| 25 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 26 | → | | | | |
| 27 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 28 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 29 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 210 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 211 | ↑+ | | | | |
| 212 | ↑+ | | | | |