

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL THEORY, PROPOSITIONS, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS REGARDING MATE RELATIONSHIPS

Purpose

This chapter begins with an overview of the theoretic propositions driving this research effort, presents specific research questions derived from those propositions, and describes methodologies for the studies that are presented in subsequent chapters. In a recent body of work (Nicotera and Associates 1993), Cushman's rules theory of interpersonal relationship development (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman, Valentinsen, Dietrich 1982) was tested and extended. Seven testable propositions were derived from the theory (see Table 1.1), four of which were directly tested and supported.

In the process, attributes and levels of friend and mate relationships were identified and tested for several cultures. The extensions accomplished by Nicotera and Associates (1993) consist of those propositions that expand the theory into the areas of relational conflict, maintenance, and deterioration. The research contained in this second volume, focusing exclusively on heterosexual mate relationships, increases the depth of the work by examining several American co-cultures, one Caribbean culture, and one Asian culture, and extends the breadth of the work by moving beyond the first four propositions into the areas of conflict and relational maintenance. In so doing, several research questions (RQs) were developed; these are presented below. Before presenting these RQs and describing the methods by which they are explored, however, basic overviews of the rules paradigm and of

Table 1.1 Propositions derived in Nicotera & Associates, 1993

Proposition 1. *Perceived self-concept support is the basis of interpersonal attraction.*

Proposition 2. *Different types of perceived self-concept support are the bases for different types of interpersonal relationships.*

Proposition 3. *Different types of self-concept support are the bases for entry into and increasing intensity of interpersonal relationships.*

Proposition 4. *The type and form of self-concept support is homogeneous by culture.*

Proposition 5. *Conflict which threatens self-concept support on crucial relationship variables—the lack of it or attacks on it—is potentially the most dangerous type of conflict in interpersonal relationships.*

Proposition 6. *Negotiation of differences in perceptions of self-concept support on crucial relationship variables cements interpersonal relationships.*

Proposition 7. *Quality interpersonal relationships consist of intimacy, personal growth, and effective communication on the crucial relationship variables.*

the general theory are presented. These two overviews draw heavily from the first chapter of Nicotera and Associates (1993).

Paradigmatic Assumptions

For our purposes in discussing interpersonal relationships, the most central of paradigmatic assumptions is the shift from a positivistic view of humans as reactors to a view of humans as actors. The rules perspective, as an alternative for communication theorists, was introduced by Cushman and Whiting (1972). Rooted in symbolic interactionism and speech act theory, the rules perspective was intended to move the field of communication away from its preoccupation with laws and positivism. The rules perspective conceives of human beings as conscious, teleological actors who choose to enact specific behaviors based on their goals and the structure of the social rules that govern and guide the specific situation (Cushman and Pearce 1977; Cushman and Whiting 1972).

The primary assumption in the rules perspective is the action principle: Social behavior is structured and organized. Action within and between human beings is not random. Humans govern

their actions by implicit and explicit rules. Finally, choice is involved in social action. According to Cushman and Pearce (1977), rules take the form of the practical syllogism:

A intends to bring about **C**;
A considers that to bring about **C** s/he must do **B**;
 therefore, **A** sets her/himself to do **B**.

The possible range of actions (**B**) is delimited by the social rule structure. The practical syllogism illustrates the perspective's epistemological assumption of a normative order in the regularities of human action (Cushman and Pearce 1977).

Human behavior is classified into two categories: Movement and Action (Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich 1982). *Movement* can be defined as habit and is governed by nomic necessity, which accounts for reactive behavior and depends on a causal relationship. *Action* is evaluative, purposive, and choice-oriented and is governed by practical necessity, which accounts for proactive or teleological behavior. Action is further classified into *information processing*—perception or thought—and *coordination*—consensus among individuals (Cushman *et al.* 1982).

In coordination situations, the basic unit of analysis is the standardized usage (Cushman *et al.* 1982). Acting in concert, individuals coordinate a standardized usage for social rules. The rule structure is either created through negotiation or recognized as a previously existing rule structure (Cushman and Whiting 1972). Regardless of its origin, the standardized usage is of primary interest to the rules theorist, since it defines the set of alternative choices for behavior (**B** in the practical syllogism above).

Characteristics of a standardized usage are as follows: First, a shared class of intentions; second, a common set of expectations; and third, sequences of communicative acts that demonstrate the level of commitment to the standardized usage (Cushman *et al.*, 1982). According to Cushman and his associates (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman and Craig 1976; Cushman and Florence 1974; Cushman and Pearce 1977; Cushman *et al.*, 1982), all human actions necessarily involve rules. Furthermore, all actions requiring coordination with others involve communication and, therefore, communication rules. Rules theorists identify two types of rules:

Constitutive rules, which specify the action's content; and *procedural* rules, which specify appropriate strategies for carrying out the action (Cushman and Whiting 1972).

Given this conception of human action, *interpersonal relationships can be seen as coordination systems* (Cushman *et al.* 1982). The function of these systems is to develop and maintain consensus on individual self-concepts. Their structures are dyadic relationships, specifically friend and mate relationships. Their processes center around the development, presentation, and validation of individual self-concepts (Cushman *et al.* 1982). Below is a discussion of Cushman's general theory of the role of communication in interpersonal relationships, which is grounded in the rules perspective and focuses on self-concept and interaction as the generative mechanisms of relationship formation and growth.

General Theory of the Role of Communication in Relationships

Filters

In their seminal work on relational development, Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) posit that relationship development progresses through a series of filters, usually conceptualized as stages. Several of the first theories of mate relationship development were based upon this notion (e.g., Knapp 1978; Lewis 1972, 1973; Murstein 1972, 1977; Nofz 1984). Cushman and his associates (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman *et al.* 1982) formulated a more complex theory of relationship development, beginning with a three-step filtering process for relationship development. First, individuals are faced with a *field of availables*. This field consists of all the others with whom it is possible to form a relationship. In this same time period, research that explored initial interaction (typified by Berger and Calabrese 1975; and Duck 1976) showed such interaction to be governed by standardized and general communication rules (Cushman *et al.* 1982).

Within the field of availables, there exists the second filter, the *field of approachables* (Cushman and Cahn 1985). This field consists of all the others whom the individual finds desirable enough

to approach for the purpose of initiating a relationship. A particular set of *entry rules*, explicated below, guide such relationship initiation. Within the field of approachables there exists the third filter, the *field of reciprocals* (Cushman and Cahn 1985). This field consists of those who have reciprocated the individual's attempt to initiate a relationship. These are the people with whom the individual has interpersonal relationships. A particular set of *intimacy/intensity rules*, explicated below, guide the growth of these relationships. Once relationship pairs have been filtered to the field of reciprocals, they progress through several relationship levels. Traditionally, casual date, steady date, fiancée, and spouse have been the level designations studied. However, in the current work, the labels for relational stages are considered an empirical question because Nicotera (in Nicotera and Associates 1993) was unable to find adequate support for the four traditional labels.

The Role of Self-Concept Support

The original theory (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman and Craig 1976; Cushman and Florence 1974; Cushman *et al.* 1982) identified self-concept as a cybernetic control system for human action in coordination situations:

Human actions that take place within a standardized communication situation require common intentions, an established set of rules for the cooperative achievement of those intentions, and a procedure for manifesting the variable practical force the actors feel for participating in the coordination task. (Cushman *et al.* 1982, 96–97)

Self-concept is an empirically verifiable construct that provides a theoretical representation of the conceptual forms through which individual actors understand and cope with the world. The construct *self-concept* thus allows the exploration of the link between thought and action (Cushman *et al.* 1982).

The nature of self-concept. Self-concept is composed of self-object relationships, which are divided into three classes (Cushman *et al.* 1982). First, the *identity self* includes self-object relationships that

label what an individual *is*, such as "I am a teacher." Second, the *evaluative self* includes self-object relationships that declare one's feelings about oneself, such as "I am a good teacher." Finally, the *behavioral self* includes self-object relationships that prescribe appropriate behavior for the identity- and evaluative selves, such as "I am a good teacher and therefore I must have my papers graded on time" (Cushman *et al.* 1982, 98).

Self-concept thus aids the individual in coordination situations in three ways (Cushman *et al.* 1982). First, the individual's encounter with an object provides information that can be generalized to other objects s/he categorizes in the same *class*. Therefore, s/he need not have an encounter with an object in order to define the self in relation to it. Second, such self-object relationships provide the individual with *expectations* for the nature of those objects s/he subsumes under the same rules. Finally, the self-concept, as it develops, provides the individual with *preconceived plans* of action (Cushman *et al.* 1982).

A self-object relationship constitutes a ready-made format for processing experience and initiating action. With such a system, a person is prepared to cope with the future and make sense out of the past. Hence, we regard the self-concept as an organized set of structures that defines the relationship of objects to individuals and that is capable of governing and directing human action. Furthermore, the self-concept, as an organized set of structures, provides the rationale for choice in the form of a valenced repertory (sic) of alternative plans of action. (Cushman *et al.* 1982, 98)

Self-concept and interaction. A primary coordination task for any individual in a communication situation is the development of intentions (Cushman and Florence 1974). These are represented by *C* in the practical syllogism. Likewise, the individual must develop the means for achieving those intentions (Cushman & Florence, 1974). These action alternatives are represented by *B* in the practical syllogism. These intentions and the acts that achieve them are integral to the most basic coordination task—determining the self, who the individual is and how s/he relates to objects (and others) in his/her environment (Cushman and Florence 1974).

The development, presentation, and validation of self-concepts is generally accepted as a central feature of the process of interpersonal communication (following Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman and Craig 1976; Cushman and Florence 1974; Cushman *et al.* 1982). The function of interpersonal communication systems is to regulate consensus with regard to individuals' self-concepts; the structure is provided by "the standardized code and network rules that guide how and when we can obtain consensus in regard to preferred self-object relationships" (Cushman *et al.* 1982, 104). In interaction, individuals propose identities for themselves and others. These identities are negotiated in interaction: an individual learns who s/he is and what s/he can do in the presence of certain others. ***Thus the self-concept, as it is developed, presented, and validated in interaction, defines the nature and type of the interpersonal relationship.***

This logic led to the postulation that "reciprocated self-concept support serves as a necessary basis for establishing any interpersonal relationship" (Cushman *et al.* 1982, 104). It follows that different types of self-concept support lead to different kinds of relationships (e.g., friend or mate), *and* that different degrees of self-concept support lead to different levels of interpersonal relationships (e.g., casual date or steady date). (Cushman *et al.* 1982) provide a thorough and cogent review of research literature grounding their conceptualization of self-concept.)

The role of self with mates. A mate has been traditionally defined as an opposite sex other for whom one clears the field of competitors (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Karp, Jackson, and Lester 1971). (Work is ongoing which applies the theory to same-sex mate relationships.) For the development of an opposite sex mate relationship, the theory posits five *entry rules*, applied to the field of approachables (Cushman and Cahn 1985, 57-58; Cushman *et al.* 1982, 109-110).

1. The greater an individual's perceptions that an opposite-sex other is physically attractive, the greater the likelihood of initiating communication aimed at establishing a mate relationship.
2. The greater an individual's perceptions that an opposite-sex other's real-self relates to one's ideal-self for a mate, the greater the likelihood of initiating communication

- aimed at establishing a mate relationship.
3. The greater an individual's perception that the male's real-ideal self-concept discrepancy is small, the greater the likelihood of initiating communication aimed at establishing a mate relationship.
 4. The greater an individual's perception that an opposite-sex other is likely to accept one's offer of a relationship, the greater the likelihood of initiating communication aimed at establishing a mate relationship.
 5. The more frequently an individual provides messages that (a) manifest self-concept support for an opposite-sex other's physical attractiveness; (b) characterize that other as relating to the individual's ideal-mate; and (c) indicate a perceived lack of discrepancy between the male's real and ideal self, the greater the likelihood that the other will perceive those messages as an attempt to initiate a mate relationship.

For the field of reciprocals, the theory posits two *intimacy/ intensity rules* (Cushman and Cahn 1985, 58; Cushman *et al.* 1982, 111).

1. The greater the female's perceived lack of discrepancy between her mate's real and ideal self-concept, the greater the likelihood the relationship will grow.
2. The greater the perception that there is reciprocation of self-concept support, the greater the likelihood the relationship will grow.

The seven propositions in Table 1.1 were developed because the rules posited by the general theory are not explicitly confirmable or deniable. The propositions are derived from the conceptual theory and the literature on mate relationships (reviewed in Nicotera and Associates 1993). *All these propositions can be directly traced in conceptual origin to the theoretic work presented in Cushman and Cahn (1985, especially pp. 5–100). As such, these propositions are not to be considered original theory; rather, they represent specific empirical statements of the general conceptual theory as originally developed by Cushman and his associates (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman et al. 1982).* The propositions

are easily operationalized and supported by the literature and by the studies in Nicotera and Associates (1993) and in this volume.

Research Questions

Proposition 1, that perceived self-concept support is the basis of interpersonal attraction, is treated as an assumption, given the strong direct support found in the previous research (Nicotera and Associates; see also Bailey and Helm 1974; Bailey and Kelly 1984; Bailey, Finney, and Bailey 1974; Bailey, Finney, and Helm 1975; Buss and Barnes 1986; Cahn 1986; Crawford 1977; Helm, Bailey, and Vance 1977). For all the cultures studied, two research questions were posed to discover the *culturally-specific* attributes and levels of mate relationships, upon which to base subsequent RQs.

RQ1a: What are the attributes of mate relationships (in each culture examined)?

RQ1b: What are the levels of mate relationships (in each culture examined)?

Proposition 2, that different types of perceived self-concept support are the bases for different types of interpersonal relationships, is not addressed in this research. Given the strong and direct support offered by the previous research (Nicotera and Associates 1993) for this proposition, it was considered more fruitful to extend the depth of the work by focusing on one type of interpersonal relationship—the mate relationship.

Proposition 3, that different types of self-concept support are the bases for *entry* into and increasing *intensity* of interpersonal relationships, is also treated as an assumption because of the support offered by the previous work (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman *et al.* 1982; Nicotera and Associates 1993). For all the cultures studied, the following research question was posed to discover the *culture-specific* nature of the attributes elicited by the pursuit of RQ1a, above.

RQ2: Which attributes are entry and which are intensity variables (in each culture examined)?

Proposition 4, that the type and form of self-concept support is homogeneous by culture, is also treated as an assumption (Nicotera and Associates 1993). This assumption can be confirmed by noting the commonality within and the diversity between the cultures studied regarding the first RQ.

Proposition 5, conflict that threatens self-concept support on crucial relationship variables—the lack of it or attacks on it—is the most potentially dangerous type of conflict in interpersonal relationships (based on Genshaft 1980; Levinger 1980; Rands, Levinger, and Mellinger 1981; Ritter 1985; Ting-Toomey 1983), represents one of the extensions of the work offered by this volume. The validity of this proposition is explored with two research questions. Given the exploratory nature of this research and problems with translation, these RQs are applied only to the cultures studied in English-speaking countries (i.e., American co-cultures and Jamaica, but not Japan).

RQ3a: Is the absence of self-concept support on crucial relationship variables related to relational disintegration?

RQ3b: What are potential sources of conflict for each level of mate relationships and for mate relationships in general?

Proposition 6, that negotiation of differences in perceptions of self-concept support on crucial relationship variables cements interpersonal relationships (based on Billingham and Sack 1987; Birchler, Weiss, and Vincent 1975; Cushman 1989; Cushman and Cahn 1985; Genshaft, 1980; Gottman, Markman, and Notarius 1977; Noller 1981; Rands *et al.* 1981; Ting-Toomey 1983), is not tested. The converse of this proposition implies that when partners' differing perceptions of self-concept support cannot be successfully negotiated, the relationship will be weakened and eventually destroyed. This reasoning follows from Proposition 5, and the process could be studied under the realm of relational maintenance and/or repair. To adequately examine this process, we would need to obtain detailed accounts of relational conflict from several cultures. Given the labor-intensive nature of such research, it was considered imprudent to embark on such research prior to a complete test of Proposition 5. Until we are more sure about the attributes of relationships as sources of conflict, focusing on the management of such conflict is premature.

Proposition 7, that quality interpersonal relationships consist of intimacy, personal growth, and effective communication on the crucial relationship variables (based on Aguirre and Kirwan 1986; Cushman 1979; Cushman 1989; Cushman and Cahn 1985; Fincham and Bradbury 1989; Montgomery 1981; Rettig and Bubolz 1983; Spanier and Lewis 1980), is explored with the following RQs. As with Proposition 5, these RQs are applied only to the cultures studied in English-speaking countries.

RQ4: Is relational quality related to intimacy, personal growth, and effective communication on the crucial relationship variables?

RQ5: Are there other factors that can be identified as important for relationship quality in different cultures?

Method

Sampling

Each study used two samples; specific descriptions of the samples are provided in the appropriate chapters. Five cultural groups were sampled from a variety of colleges and universities. Three are American co-cultures: White Americans of European descent; African Americans; and Deaf White Americans of European descent. The other two cultural groups were from Jamaica and Japan. The population most commonly studied in this line of research has been college students.

Though we cannot generalize beyond this population, we must not assume that such sampling diminishes the work...(While in college many individuals meet) their future spouses. Regrettably, the population of that same age that does not attend college remains untapped...However, for study of relationship development, college student samples are highly appropriate. At that time in our lives we are most active in developing friendships and mate relationships. The college experience, like almost no other, provides constant

opportunity to meet and spend time with a great number of one's peers. From the close proximity of living quarters and the semester-to-semester shift of classmates to the overwhelming number of organized social activities, the college campus offers a seemingly boundless field of availables. This is a perfect setting in which to study relationship development. (Nicotera and Associates 1993, 224-225)

White Americans represent the lion's share of the population of "Americans" who have been surveyed in this research tradition. Because the researchers conducting the work have until now been faculty at predominantly white institutions, the American college student samples of convenience have been mostly white. In fact, research in this tradition has, until now, failed to differentiate American co-cultures, treating all Americans as a single culture. This may be one of the reasons Nicotera (in Nicotera and Associates 1993) was unable to find intracultural homogeneity for mateship levels in her American sample.

In fact, there is no discernable "American culture." The United States, as a multicultural society, is made up of several-coexisting cultural groups. This fact leads to the use of the term "co-culture," which connotes the coexistence of several cultures in American society, rather than the term "sub-culture," which connotes that there is a larger, superordinate culture that predominates and is privileged over lesser "sub"-cultures.

All three American samples were drawn from universities in the Middle Atlantic region of the United States. The White American samples were drawn from a large state university; the African American samples from a middle-sized Historically Black University (HBU); and the White Deaf samples from a middle-sized university for the Deaf. (The rationale for the inclusion of White Deaf individuals as a cultural group but not African Americans who are deaf is provided in that chapter.) The Jamaican samples were drawn from two colleges in Jamaica; and the Japanese samples from a large university in Japan.

Jamaican culture was included for two reasons. First, almost no research on human communication processes has been conducted with this cultural group. Second, like other Caribbean cultures, Jamaican culture is an interesting blend—with African, British,

European, North American, Central American, South American, and Asian influences. Japanese culture was included because only one study has been conducted in this research tradition (Ju, in Nicotera and Associates 1993), which stopped at testing traditional attributes of the mate relationship. None of the propositions has been tested in Japanese culture.

This sampling is obviously not representative of the wide variety of cultural groups in the United States and internationally—and is not intended to be such. As a straight application and extension of the tradition, it was important to continue the work with college student populations. There is a great need for the inclusion of other U.S. cultural groups in this research tradition. There are practical problems in studying U.S. cultural groups while maintaining the college student population. Intact groups are not often readily available, and those that are available are usually racially, but not culturally, homogeneous. For example, sampling a Hispanic or Asian or Native American student organization would include individuals from a variety of specific cultures. This volume offers a start to the process of examining and comparing U.S. co-cultures, taking advantage of the existence of intact cultural groups that are both readily available and fairly culturally homogeneous. The groups studied do allow interesting comparisons. As stated in the preface to this volume, there is still much to be done in this line of work. This volume is merely the beginning of the theory's application cross-culturally.

Procedures

Nicotera and Associates (1993) demonstrated the set of techniques used here which both identifies relational stages and attributes in different cultures and allows for cross-cultural comparison without distortion. The method for level and attribute identification was twofold. First, open-ended surveys were distributed to samples in each culture. These surveys asked respondents to list attributes of the mate relationship. Then, respondents were asked to list the levels (stages) through which mate relationships progress from least to most intimate. The results of these questions were used to identify the most commonly mentioned attributes (RQ1a)

and levels (RQ1b). (The specifics of these analyses are provided below under "analysis.") In this first stage of data collection, participants (except for those in Japan) were also asked to list several sources (topics) of conflict in mate relationships. As with attributes and levels, the most commonly mentioned of these were used to construct part of the second survey. Finally the surveys (except for Japan) asked respondents to list what makes for a high quality relationship (RQ5).

For the second stage of data collection, the selected labels for attributes and levels were arrayed in a questionnaire in paired comparisons of attributes with levels (RQ2); levels with the concept "ideal mate" and with the most intimate level (RQ1b); the concept "breaking up" with "lack of" each attribute (RQ3a); conflict sources with levels (RQ3b); and the concept "relationship quality" with "personal growth (generally)," "intimacy (generally)," personal growth in relation to each attribute in turn, and good communication about each attribute in turn (RQ4). Finally, following all the paired comparisons was a set of questions asking what "things could cause conflict" for each of the relationship stages (RQ3b). These second surveys were distributed to a second sample from each cultural population.

Analysis

The results of the first survey provided data that were analyzed to explore RQs 1a, 1b, and 5. RQs 1a and 1b assess the appropriate labels for attributes and levels of mate relationships in each culture. For each cultural group, if thirty percent or more of the sample listed an attribute, it was considered to be an important characteristic of the mate relationship for that culture. The resulting list of attributes represents the answer to RQ1a.

For the level designations (RQ1b), a qualitative analysis was employed. For each culture, a large set of stage lists was generated. These lists were examined for commonalities and patterns, and a general set of stages was generated. This general set of stages was then compared to each individual list and refined until it was judged that the general list was a fair representation of all individual lists. As a final caution, a research assistant compared each

individual list against the general list to be sure the general list did not contradict any individual list. The general list represents the answer to RQ1b.

The second survey was generated and analyzed with the Galileo computer program. In this method, a set of concepts are arranged in all possible paired comparisons and participants are asked to estimate the "distances" between the concepts. Because a full Galileo model was not necessary for this research, all paired comparisons that were not relevant to the RQs were deleted. This helped to avoid the problem of participant fatigue due to the large number of concepts. In a full Galileo model, the aggregate configuration of concepts is factor analyzed, quantified, and verified with Galileo analysis. The Galileo computer program determines the uniqueness of dimensions and perceived social distance relative to a specific point of reference. Without a full set of paired-comparison data, the Galileo program cannot generate this full analysis. Instead, the program was used to generate means and z-scores (with outliers controlled for) to examine how the concepts in the survey relate to each other in each culture.

In the second survey, items from the lists of attributes and levels, as described above, were arranged in paired comparisons such that all the levels were paired with the concepts "ideal mate," "commitment," and with the most intimate level. The mean values of these distances were used to quantitatively verify the progression of stages generated qualitatively (RQ1b). In addition, z-scores of difference were computed (with outliers controlled for) so that all levels could be compared on their mean distances from the most intimate level, and from the concepts "ideal mate" and "commitment" (RQ1b). The results of these analyses allowed necessary adjustments to be made before analyzing data for RQ2.

The term "ideal mate" was used because this line of work has traditionally used it as the criterion for measuring increasing degrees of mateship (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Nicotera and Associates 1993). For these investigations, the term "commitment" was also used because the theoretic tradition has characterized the developing mate relationship in terms of increasing commitment. "A mate relationship grows more permanent as the couple achieves a deepening sense of *commitment*. The closer the other comes to one's ideal conception of a mate, the more likely one is to clear the

field of competitors and feel *committed* to the relationship" (Cushman and Cahn, in Nicotera and Associates 1993, 140, [*emphasis mine*]). It is clear from this description that commitment is a concrete operationalization of the more abstract concept of the "ideal mate." To further illustrate this point, Cushman and Cahn (in Nicotera and Associates 1993) go on to describe attempts by researchers to discriminate between levels of mateship as attempts to "discriminate between different degrees or levels of developing *commitment*" (Cushman and Cahn, in Nicotera and Associates 1993, 140, [*emphasis mine*]).

Research Question 2 assesses which of the attributes generated by RQ1 are entry variables and which are intensity variables. The mean distances between the attributes and the levels were examined. Entry variables are those attributes whose mean distances to the levels remain the same across levels; intensity variables are those whose distances become progressively smaller as the level increases in intimacy. These progressions were statistically verified by the computation of z-scores of difference (with outliers controlled for) which reveal whether progressive relationship levels are significantly different in their respective mean distances from the attributes in question.

Research Question 3a assesses whether a lack of the attributes discovered in RQ1 is related to relational disintegration. To explore this RQ, mean distances and z-scores of difference (with outliers controlled for) between the "lack of" each attribute and the concept "breaking up" were examined. RQ3b seeks to identify sources of conflict for each level and for mate relationships in general. First, the list of conflict sources from the first survey were analyzed to create a list of those mentioned by at least thirty percent of the sample. Mean distances and z-scores of difference (with outliers controlled for) were examined between these conflict sources and the levels, as decided upon after quantitative analysis of Galileo data on levels. Finally, the open-ended question in the second survey elicited further sources, specific to each level.

Research Question 4 attempts to determine whether relational quality is linked to intimacy (generally), personal growth (generally), and to personal growth and good communication in regard to each attribute. To assess this question, mean distances and z-scores of difference (with outliers controlled for) are examined

between the concept "quality relationship" and the following other concepts: intimacy (generally); personal growth (generally); personal growth in relation to each attribute in turn; and good communication about each attribute in turn. The final research question seeks to generate other factors that contribute to relationship quality. This question was assessed by examining lists generated in the first survey, as described above.

Summary and Organization of the Book

This chapter has given a brief overview of the prior progress made in this research program (Nicotera and Associates 1993), summarized the paradigmatic assumptions and the original general theory (Cushman and Cahn 1985; Cushman, Valentinsen, and Dietrich 1982), presented the RQs to be pursued in the research in this book, and described the general methodological procedures to be used to examine those RQs. Chapters Two through Six present studies in several cultures that examine RQs 1a, 1b, and 2. Data from White Americans, the traditional population for this line of research that studies "Americans," is presented in Chapter Two; data from African Americans in Chapter Three; from White Deaf Americans in Chapter Four; from Jamaicans in Chapter Five; and from Japanese in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven then presents the results of RQs 3a and 3b (regarding conflict and relational maintenance) for the American co-cultures and Jamaica. Chapter Eight presents the results of RQs 4 and 5 (regarding relationship quality) for the American co-cultures and Jamaica. The last chapter provides a discussion of cultural comparison, discusses the implications of this body of work, and looks to its future.