FRIENDS' AND ACQUAINTANCES' CONVERSATIONS II: CODED DIFFERENCES

Sally Planalp
University of Colorado

This is the second of a pair of studies investigating differences be-
tween friends' and acquaintances' conversations. In Study I (Planalp &
Benson, 1992), naive judges were asked to indicate whether they
thought conversations were between friends or acquaintances and
why. In Study II (reported here), the same conversations were analyzed
to determine if the reasons given by judges in Study I did, in fact,
discriminate between friends and acquaintances when coded from the
conversations and analyzed statistically. Results indicated that the pat-
tern of differences was consistent with Study I, although only a few
differences were significant statistically due to low power. Discrimi-
nant analyses indicated that two variables alone, mutual knowledge
and continuity, predicted friends/acquaintances' differences as well as
the entire set of variables and with the same level of accuracy (about
80 percent) as the judges in Study I.

Intimacy and interaction are two key concepts for understanding
relationships. Intimacy is what makes relationships between
friends so different from relationships between strangers, but both
types of relationships are founded in interaction. Existing theories
about the differences between intimate and non-intimate relation-
ships, however, have not been grounded well in close observation
of interaction. Instead, most empirical evidence comes from self-
reports of conversational behavior or from the analysis of isolated
variables in conversation (notably intimacy of self-disclosure). As
a result, comprehensive theories of the differences between inti-
mate (or interpersonal) relationships and non-intimate (or imper-

sonal) relationships, such as those of Altman & Taylor (1973, modified by Knapp, 1984) or Hinde (1979), have not been grounded in comprehensive analyses of observed interaction. At the same time, we know of many observed behaviors that distinguish interpersonal from impersonal relationships (such as self-disclosure, politeness and laughter), but we do not know which are most common or most important.

Because of the need to ground comprehensive theories of interpersonal and impersonal relationships in more thorough analyses of interaction *and* the need to sort out the many variables known to distinguish between interpersonal and impersonal interactions, we undertook two studies. Both were designed to analyze friends' and acquaintances' conversations as examples of interpersonal and impersonal relationships, to search for the widest possible range of differences, to understand how they are manifested in interaction and to determine which are most common and most important.

In Study I (Planalp & Benson, 1992), naive observers listened to tapes of excerpts from thirty-six conversations, judged whether the conversations were between friends or between acquaintances and indicated why they made the judgments they did. Their reasons were coded into thirty propositions about the perceived differences between friends' and acquaintances' conversations (see Planalp & Benson, 1992: Table 2). Only two of the thirty reasons were not clearly directional; that is, *telling stories* and *tone of voice* were given about equally often as reasons for believing a conversation was between friends as between acquaintances.

The other twenty-eight reasons ranged from very specific behaviors (such as friends having more laughter, more profanity, more interruptions and fewer pauses) to general qualities of the interactions (such as friends showing more intimacy, more relaxation, more spontaneity and less formality). The most common reason given was *mutual knowledge* (25 percent of all reasons). Judges thought that partners in the conversations were friends when they shared knowledge and showed in their conversations that they knew they shared it. Judges thought the partners were acquaintances when they lacked mutual knowledge. The second most common reason was *content intimacy* (14 percent of all reasons). Judges thought that conversations were between friends when they were more intimate, emotional, detailed and showed greater self-disclosure. When conversations were more superficial, demographic, shallow and contained more surface information, judges

thought they were between acquaintances. Three other reasons were also given fairly frequently (5 percent of all reasons for each): *relaxed*, relaxed conversations being attributed to friends; *continuity*, references to past, ongoing or future conversations being attributed to friends; and *mutual friends*, references to common friends being attributed to friends. Each of the other twenty-three reasons accounted for less than 5 percent of all reasons, but together they made up the remaining 46 percent.

The differences found in Study I were based on perceptions of friends' and acquaintances' conversations. Study II was designed to determine whether those perceptions would be corroborated by evidence based on direct coding of the conversations. There are three basic reasons to complement perceptions of naive judges with direct coding of conversations.

First, the naive judges in Study I were able to distinguish friends' from acquaintances' conversations about 80 percent of the time, but they were still guessing based on their beliefs about how friends and acquaintances converse differently. Direct coding of the conversations might reveal that some of those beliefs were wrong, at least for the thirty-six conversations analyzed. For example, people may believe that friends distribute floortime more equally but, in fact, observation of conversations may reveal that acquaintances' floortime is more equal.

Second, most of the naive judges gave more than one reason for each judgment ($\bar{x} = 3.3$), but a dominant reason may have led to the high accuracy while additional reasons contributed very little. Coding of the conversations might reveal a few powerful variables and many others that are relatively inconsequential. For example, a judge might have thought that the conversation was between acquaintances because their topics were relatively superficial, they had a lot of pauses, and they did not seem very relaxed. The judgment may have been based primarily on self-disclosure, however, with pauses and lack of relaxation only providing supporting evidence.

Third, coding may provide a clearer idea about how friend/acquaintance differences are manifested concretely in interaction. Some of the reasons given in Study I have obvious operational counterparts. For example, equal or unequal distribution of floortime has the straightforward operational definition of percentage of words spoken by each partner. Other reasons are more impressionistic and more difficult to operationalize. For example, it

is difficult to determine behaviorally what constitutes relaxation, spontaneity or involvement. Coding may provide some clues to the behaviors which make up these more global attributes of conversations.

All twenty-eight reasons given by naive judges in Study I that discriminated consistently between friends and acquaintances were coded from the conversations in Study II. For those that could be coded reliably, statistical tests were performed to determine which variables discriminated between friends' and acquaintances' conversations at significant levels. The pattern of results was also analyzed for general consistency or inconsistency with those of Study I. Finally, the variables were tested as a set for their ability to discriminate friends' from acquaintances' conversations.

Methods

Conversations were recorded between 36 pairs of students (one-half friends, one-half acquaintances and one-third each female–female, male–male and male–female [counterbalanced]). Two-minute segments were excerpted from the conversations at intervals of 0 min., 5 min., 10 min., 15 min., 20 min. and 25 min. into the half-hour conversations (counterbalanced with relationship and sex).

Coding procedures were as follows. First, two coders (the author and a second coder) decided on an appropriate unit of analysis (the word, turn or conversation) and a tentative operational definition of the variable. The two coders then coded one-third of the conversations independently, assessed their reliabilities and discussed disagreements. When reliabilities were acceptable (percentage agreement > .75, kappa > .60, r > .70), the complete set was coded and disagreements were resolved by discussion. When coders judged that they could not code one-third of the conversations reliably without forcing artificial agreement, they ended discussions, coded the entire set and reported reliabilities.

Two of the original thirty variables from Study I (*telling stories* (No. 17) and *tone of voice* (No. 29)) were omitted because they were not associated consistently with perceptions of either friends' or acquaintances' conversations (Planalp & Benson, 1992: Table 2). Three variables were also subdivided in order to make them more amenable to coding and to analyze them in greater detail.

First, the proposition for *feedback* (No. 20) in Study I was 'Friends are more likely than acquaintances to offer more feedback or higher quality feedback and to use fewer verbal reinforcers'. In the current study, it seemed likely that verbal reinforcers could be identified in the conversations and separated from quality of feedback, so the two parts of *feedback* were coded separately.

Second, the proposition for *continuity* (No. 32) in Study I was 'Friends are more likely to refer to past encounters, spend time together, and to want and to plan future encounters than are acquaintances; acquaintances' past encounters are limited to specific circumstances'. In the current study, *continuity* was subdivided into specific references to past conversations and specific references to future conversations, as well as being measured by *general continuity*, a three-part judg-

ment about each entire conversation as showing either continuity, lack of conti-
nuity or references to only one past conversation. The sum of references to past and
future conversations correlated with general continuity +.80.

Third, the proposition for *mutual knowledge* (No. 37) in Study I was 'Friends are
more likely to have mutual knowledge; acquaintances are more likely to lack
mutual knowledge'. In this study, *general mutual knowledge* (No. 37) was coded at
five levels which characterized whole conversations: (1) the partners *had* mutual
knowledge, (2) the level of mutual knowledge was *indeterminant*, (3) the level of
mutual knowledge was *mixed* (it had some knowledge and lacked other knowl-
edge), (4) mutual knowledge *developed* over the course of the conversation and (5)
the partners *lacked* mutual knowledge. In order to find out more about the specific
types of mutual knowledge, each conversation was coded for whether it contained
knowledge of: (1) other people, (2) biographical information, (3) the partner's
present life, (4) a specific event in the past, (5) the partner's future plans and
schedule, (6) the partner's personal habits and (7) other forms of mutual knowl-
edge. Reliabilities for distinguishing between types of mutual knowledge were .87
(percentage agreement) and .72 (kappa). The specific types were coded into three
categories: (1) *having*, (2) *mixed* and (3) *lacking*. The other two categories used for
general mutual knowledge, *indeterminant* and *developing*, were not needed because
it was much easier to pinpoint specific types of mutual knowledge than to character-
ize the entire conversation and trends were not noted within each type. The sum of
the specific kinds of mutual knowledge correlated with general mutual knowledge
+.88, indicating that general mutual knowledge represented the subtypes very
well.

Several variables based on global judgments of the conversations could not be
coded reliably. Because eight of these were mentioned frequently in Study I as
important discriminators between friends' and acquaintances', the reliability prob-
lem was circumvented by using a larger number of naive judges. Between 16 and 35
students ($\bar{x} = 25$) from classes comparable to those used in Study I listened to each
conversation and rated the following variables on 9-point scales: *superficiality/
intimacy* (No. 14), *poor/good feedback* (No. 20), *smooth/not smooth* (No. 28),
involved/bored (No. 27), *relaxed/not relaxed* (No. 26), *formal/informal* (No. 25)
and *hesitant/spontaneous* (No. 24). *Number of topics* (No. 13) was rated on a 3-
point scale, 1 = one topic, 2 = not sure, 3 = more than one topic. The judges could
not be trained because the expert coders (including the author) had failed to agree
on operational definitions of the variables, so judges made their decisions based on
their own naive interpretations of the variables.

Statistical analyses consisted of chi-square tests of discrete variables (friends/
acquaintances by each variable split at the median or as coded (see Table 1)) in
order to maximize power. Power to detect differences at $p. = .01$ for 2×2 tables
was .66 for large effects (w = .5). Variables that were coded as continuous (e.g.
floortime and pace) were analyzed in the same way to avoid problems due to non-
normal distributions, but were supplemented by *t*-tests. Significance levels for *t*-
tests never contradicted those for chi-squares, but when estimates of effect size
were contradictory, both were reported. Power to detect differences for *t*-tests was
.49 for large effects (d = .8) at $p. = .01$. The eight continuous variables judged on
rating scales were distributed relatively normally and so were analyzed with *t*-tests
contrasting friends and acquaintances.

To determine if the overall pattern of results was consistent with Study I, a sign

test was performed. To determine the overall predictive power of a set of variables, discriminant analyses were also done using the three coded or rated variables that were the strongest predictors entered stepwise according to proportion of explained variance. A maximum of only three was chosen because of the small number of cases (thirty-six conversations), following the rule of thumb of ten cases per predictor variable (McLaughlin, 1980: 188).

Results

Operational definitions and reliabilities for all the variables that were coded (28 original variables plus additions noted above) are reported in Table 1. The variables are numbered to correspond with the numbering from Study I (Planalp & Benson, 1992: Table 2). Of those 32, 19 were coded within acceptable levels of reliability (percentage agreement > .75, kappa > .60, r > .70). Of the 13 remaining with unacceptable reliabilities, 8 were determined to be important based on Study I and were judged on continuous rating scales following the procedures discussed earlier. The final 5 variables were neither coded reliably nor considered important enough to warrant pursuing and were not analyzed further (*slang* (No. 4), *opinions and advice* (No. 19), *references to friends, not including partner* (No. 31), *support and reassurance* (No. 38) and *impress* (No. 39).

Results of the analyses of differences between friends' and acquaintances' conversations for the variables coded directly from the conversations are reported in Table 2. Using the moderately stringent criterion of p < .01 to correct for the experiment-wise error associated with multiple tests but not to sacrifice too much power, only 7 of the 25 tests reached significance. These were *continuity* (general) (No. 32), *explicit references to future conversations* (No. 32), *mutual friends* (No. 33), *mutual knowledge* (general) (No. 37) and three specific forms of mutual knowledge, *mutual knowledge of other people, mutual knowledge of the partner's present life* and *mutual knowledge of particular events*. All differences were in the direction predicted and all effect sizes were large, except for that of *mutual friends*, which was moderate.

Of the 25 statistical tests run, 21 were in the direction hypothesized (sign test p < .01). Of the 4 remaining, 2 (*floortime* (No. 1) and *number of questions* (No. 11)) showed no difference for the chi-square test but *floortime* was in the direction contrary to prediction for the *t*-test. Two variables, *interruptions* (No. 3) and *pace* (No. 8), ran contrary to prediction, but at non-significant levels for both chi-square and *t*-test.

Results of the analyses of variables judged on rating scales are reported in Table 3. Only one of the *t*-tests comparing the ratings of friends' conversations with acquaintances', *formality* (No. 25) was significant at the p < .01 level (controlling for eight tests). Seven of the eight were in the direction hypothesized (sign test p. < .10). The variable *poor/good feedback* (No. 20) was contrary to prediction.

Finally, discriminant analyses were performed to determine how well the best three predictors as a set discriminated between friends' and acquaintances' conversations. The variables chosen as predictors were *mutual knowledge* (general) (No. 37), *continuity* (general) (No. 32) and, in separate analyses, either *formality* (No. 25), *mutual friends* (No. 33) or *content intimacy* (No. 14). General *mutual knowledge* and general *continuity* were chosen because they were the most inclusive (ruling out subcomponents of continuity and mutual knowledge) and the most significant statistically (both p. < .001). *Formality, mutual friends* and *continuity*

TABLE 1
Summary of coded variables

Variable	Unit[a]	Percentage Agree	Kappa	Operational definition or example	(F/A)[b]
1. Distribution of floortime	(W)	$r = .999$[c]		i.e. % words most talkative person	A>F
3. Number of interruptions	(T)	.879	.688	i.e. simultaneous speech	F>A
4. Profanity	(W)	.999	.928	e.g. shit, sucked, god, hell, damn	F>A
5. Slang	(W)	.994	.478	e.g. stressing on it, mashed	F>A
7. Filled pauses	(C)	$r = .855$		i.e. mm, uh	A>F
8. Pace	(C)	$r = .999$		i.e. words per minute	F>A
9. Laughter	(T)	.957	.823	i.e. number of turns where occurred	F>A
11. Number of questions	(T)	.966	.913	e.g. what did Bart want?	A>F
13. One topic	(C)	.750	.468	i.e. one topic per conversation	A>F
14. Content intimacy	(C)	.722	.489	i.e. coded as superficial, moderate/mixed or intimate	F>A
19. Opinions and advice	(T)	.973	.386	i.e. providing information partner needs to accomplish goal, or opinion about action of O or action of S and O together	F>A
20. Verbal reinforcers	(T)	.955	.744	e.g. yeah, uh-huh, right, exactly	A>F
Quality of feedback	(C)	.583	.318	i.e. coders' impressions	F>A
21. Negative judgments	(T)	.997	.768	i.e. negative judgments, criticism, insults and negative evaluations about O's actions or personal attributes	F>A
22. Disagreements	(T)	.986	.759	i.e. does not include corrections or imperatives that are not objected to	F>A
23. Favors	(C)	.944	.720	e.g. you can have some free tickets	F>A
24. Hesitant/ spontaneous	(C)	.417	−.024	i.e. coders' impressions	A>F
25. Formal/informal	(C)	.583	.310	i.e. coders' impressions	A>F
26. Relaxation	(C)	.583	.210	i.e. coders' impressions	F>A
27. Involvement	(C)	.250	−.036	i.e. coders' impressions	F>A
28. Smoothness	(C)	.083	−.055	i.e. coders' impressions	F>A
30. We/us/our referring to interactors	(T)	.997	.959	e.g. we'll be looking, let's go	F>A
31. Friends not including partner	(C)	.667	.000	e.g. I'm going out with my friends	A>F
32. Continuity (general)	(C)	.917	.830	e.g. we always talk too much	F>A
Explicit references to past conversations	(T)	.999	.876	e.g. I told you, you asked me	F>A
Explicit references to future conversations	(T)	.889	.671	e.g. It'll be next Thursday before you get to see me again.	F>A
33. Mutual friends	(C)	.861	.639	i.e. Are you going with Donnie?	F>A
35. Roommates or lovers	(C)	.917	.623	e.g. What about our damage deposit?	F>A
37. Mutual knowledge (general)	(C)	.750	.671	i.e. coded as have, indeterminate, mixed, developing, or lack	F have A lack
Types of mutual knowledge	(C)	.928	.860	i.e. whether have or lack knowledge, or mixed for each type	F have A lack
38. Support and reassurance	(T)	.985	.544	i.e. reassurance of positive outcomes of O's or S and O's current actions or that O's personal attributes are good	F>A
39. Impress	(C)	.750	.449	i.e. portray in best possible light, show off knowledge, goals, accomplishments or skills	A>F

Note: Variables are numbered to be consistent with Study I (Planalp & Benson, 1992).
[a] Units of analysis were the word (W), turn (T), conversation (C).
[b] Indicates whether variable is predicted to be greater for friends than acquaintances (F>A) or vice versa (A>F)
[c] Correlation coefficients (r) between coders were used with continuous variables (e.g. number of words, filled pauses, etc. per conversation).

Variable	Test	Prob.	Direction as hypothesized?
1. Distribution of floortime	$\chi^2 = 0.00$	1.000	No difference
	$t = 0.55$	.589	No
3. Number of interruptions	$\chi^2 = 1.65$	.436	No
4. Profanity	$\chi^2 = 1.00$	.317	Yes
7. Filled pauses	$\chi^2 = 1.78$	.182	Yes
8. Pace	$\chi^2 = 0.44$	.505	No
	$t = 1.85$	.083	No
9. Laughter	$\chi^2 = 1.01$	.314	Yes
11. Number of questions	$\chi^2 = 0.00$	1.000	No difference
20. Verbal reinforcers	$\chi^2 = 4.01$	.019	Yes, w = .39
	$t = 2.18$	.036	Yes, d = .74
21. Negative judgments	$\chi^2 = 0.53$	.470	Yes
22. Disagreement	$\chi^2 = 2.53$	.111	Yes
23. Favors	$\chi^2 = 0.28$	.596	Yes
30. We/us/our referring to themselves	$\chi^2 = 4.71$	.030	Yes, w = .42
32. Continuity (general)	$\chi^2 = 13.17$	.001	Yes, w = .60
Explicit references to past conversation	$\chi^2 = 0.93$	.335	Yes
Explicit references to future conversation	$\chi^2 = 7.88$	.005	Yes, w = .54
33. Mutual friends	$\chi^2 = 7.87$	.005	Yes, w = .32
34. Roommates/lovers	$\chi^2 = 3.72$	.054	Yes, w = .40
37. Mutual knowledge (general)	$\chi^2 = 17.83$	.001	Yes, w = .70
Mutual knowledge of			
Other people	$\chi^2 = 23.14$	.000	Yes, w = .80
Biographical	$\chi^2 = 2.84$	.092	Yes
Present life	$\chi^2 = 14.67$	.002	Yes, w = .64
Particular event	$\chi^2 = 12.00$	.003	Yes, w = .58
Schedules and plans	$\chi^2 = 6.00$	.116	Yes
Habits	$\chi^2 = 0.53$	.467	Yes
Other	$\chi^2 = 0.00$	1.000	Yes

Note: Power to detect large effect sizes at alpha = .01 for *t*-test (d.f. = 34) (d = .8) was .49 and for chi-square (d.f. = 1) (w = .5) was .66 (Cohen, 1977).

were reasonable third choices because they were important in both studies (in Study I 3, 4 and 11 percent of all cues, respectively; in Study II: $p. < .01$, d = .88, $p. < .005$, w = .40, and $p. < .04$, d = .60 respectively).

Stepwise discriminant analyses indicated that *mutual knowledge* always entered the analysis first (37 percent explained variance), *continuity* always entered second (contributing an additional 8 percent explained variance) and none of the other three, *formality, mutual friends* or *content intimacy* accounted for enough additional variance to be included. *Mutual knowledge* and *continuity* classified 83 percent of all cases correctly, including 100 percent of acquaintances and 67 percent of friends.

Discussion

Study I and Study II taken together reveal a wide range of differences between friends' and acquaintances' conversations. In Study

TABLE 3
Summary of differences in rated variables between friends and acquaintances

	Mean (SD)		t-Value	One-tailed prob.	d[a]
	Acquaint.	Friends			
13. Only one topic/more than one topic	2.14[b] (.51)	2.46 (.60)	1.69	.05	.57
14. Superficial/intimate	4.36 (1.06)	4.97 (.97)	1.81	.04	.60
20. Little or poor feedback/ lots of or good feedback	5.08 (1.14)	4.94 (1.23)	− .38	.35	.13
24. Hesitant/spontaneous	5.65 (.99)	6.13 (1.72)	1.02	.16	.35
25. Formal/informal	5.53 (1.31)	6.85 (1.69)	2.61	.01	.88
26. Not relaxed/relaxed	6.20 (.95)	6.65 (1.76)	.95	.18	.34
27. Bored/involved	5.66 (1.03)	6.06 (1.31)	1.01	.16	.34
28. Not smooth/smooth	5.42 (.93)	5.67 (1.51)	.60	.28	.21

Note: Average correlation among variables was .646, ranging from .145 (feedback and number of topics to .961 (spontaneity and relaxation).
[a] Power to detect large effect sizes for *t*-tests (d.f. 34) (d = .8) at alpha = .01 was .49.
[b] Higher values are toward the right pole of the dimension (i.e. intimate, informal, spontaneous, etc.). All scales were 9-point scales, except only one topic/more than one topic which was a 3-point scale with the center labeled 'not sure'.

I, when naive judges were asked to indicate whether conversations were between friends or acquaintances and why, their reasons were summarized into twenty-eight propositions about how friends' conversations differ from acquaintances' (see Planalp & Benson, 1992: Table 2). In Study II, when those propositions were converted to hypotheses that were tested by coding the conversations directly, the general pattern of differences was supported, with only a few tentative exceptions (see Tables 2 and 3).

Friends' and acquaintances' conversation could be distinguished with approximately the same level of accuracy by statistical tests as by naive judges. The number of conversations classified correctly with discriminant analysis (83 percent) was very similar to accuracy ratings based on judges' intuitions from Study I (79–83 percent).

Three key variables, however, contributed differently to the predictive power of Study I and Study II. *Mutual knowledge* was an important variable in both studies since it made up 25 percent of all reasons given in Study I and was the best predictor in Study II. *Continuity*, on the other hand, made up only 5 percent of all reasons in Study I but was the second strongest predictor in Study

II. *Content intimacy* was the second most common reason given in Study I but did not contribute to the overall predictive power of the discriminant analysis of coded data beyond mutual knowledge and continuity. In short, *mutual knowledge* was important in both studies, *continuity* was more important in Study II and *content intimacy* was more important in Study I.

Mutual knowledge was also analyzed further by subdividing it into seven types: knowledge of (1) other people, (2) the partner's biography, (3) the partner's present life, (4) a particular event, (5) the partner's schedules or plans, (6) the partner's habits and (7) other things. The most important types for discriminating between friends and acquaintances were knowledge of other people, knowledge of a particular event and knowledge of the other's present life. The other four types were more common for friends than acquaintances, but did not discriminate at statistically significant levels.

Knowledge of other people was notable both in its presence for friends and its absence for acquaintances. Friends would say 'What did Bart want last night?' or 'Brad's stressing on it' without having to explain who Bart or Brad was. Acquaintances, on the other hand, would refer to 'one of my good friends that lives where I live' rather than to her roommate by name or ask 'do you know Mark Musselman?' rather than to assume the partner did know him. Friends talk about people they both know, perhaps in part because other people are important parts of our lives. Acquaintances talk about people they might know in common or explain their connections with people they talk about.

Knowledge of the partner's biography was much more notable in its absence for acquaintances than in its presence for friends. Acquaintances showed ignorance of the most basic information about each other, including their ages, where they were from, how long they had been at the university and what high schools they had attended. At times they seemed just to tell each other those things (classic introductory self-disclosure) and at other times biographical information came up in conversation about another topic. For example, one person told a story about being carded at Bennigan's and in doing so revealed that she was not quite 21.

Knowledge of the partner's present life included what relationships the partners were in, what activities they engaged in, what possessions they had and what beliefs they held. Friends had a good deal of this knowledge and acquaintances had very little. For

example, two friends revealed that they knew about each other's music when talking about making copies of each other's tapes. Another pair of friends obviously knew about each other's romantic partners. Acquaintances, on the other hand, knew very little. For example, one person didn't know that her partner was in the Army Reserves, another didn't know that her partner had four children and another didn't know that her partner had lost his driver's license and couldn't drive.

The other three forms of mutual knowledge — *knowledge of the partner's schedules and plans, knowledge of the partner's personal habits* and *knowledge of particular events* — were mentioned less frequently than the others. *Knowledge of schedules and plans* included friends knowing what the other was doing over the weekend, what papers were due and where he or she was going for the spring break. In contrast, acquaintances did not know information such as whether the partner was going to move in with her boyfriend, that the partner's sister was getting married the following summer or whether the partner was going to stick with his/her major. Friends' *knowledge of each others' habits* included knowing that the partner procrastinates and knowing that the two of them always talk instead of studying. Acquaintances did not show any particular lack of knowledge of personal habits in their conversations. Friends showed mutual *knowledge of specific events* in the past such as the partner's trip to a movie, the partner's party or episodes in bars. In one case, an acquaintance told a story about a trip to Florida, which the partner obviously did not know anything about.

These findings indicate that friends are real experts on one another. They know about each other's backgrounds, habits, present lives, future plans, particular experiences, people they know and so on. Moreover, they use that knowledge almost constantly in conversation. Acquaintances, of course, know very little about one another and show their ignorance almost constantly in conversation. One may argue that the examples of mutual knowledge found in these conversations are peculiar to college students and would not be found with the same frequency in other populations. That may be, but it seems likely that the general category types are fairly resilient. Married couples, for instance, know each other's biographies and habits and talk about their dirty dishes, their plans for the summer, their dinner party last week and their children and co-workers.

Continuity was more important in Study II than in Study I, perhaps because it was more easily coded than *content intimacy* and *relaxation* which were cited more frequently than *continuity* in Study I. Friends made comments like 'where'd you go last night?', 'we usually talk . . .' or 'it will be next Thursday before you get to see me again', indicating that their interaction has a past, an ongoing present and future. Acquaintances rarely spoke about other interactions, and when they did, they referred to only one 'I was so lucky you were at Bennigan's that night'.

In Study I, *content intimacy* (in essence, intimacy of self-disclosure) was the second most common reason that judges gave for thinking the conversation was between friends or between acquaintances (after *mutual knowledge*). In the current study, however, content intimacy had no special status, predicting friends or acquaintances no better than formality. Why this discrepancy?

First, *content intimacy* is a very global, impressionistic reason which is difficult to operationalize. The proposition from Study I (Table 2) reads 'The content of friends' conversations is more intimate, emotional, detailed, and shows greater self-disclosure than acquaintances'; the content of acquaintances' conversations contains more superficial, demographic, shallow and surface information than friends'.' Two coders used the most basic discriminations (superficial vs moderate/mixed vs intimate) to judge intimacy for each conversation, but could not reach adequate agreement. The group of judges who listened to the conversations did make judgments about content intimacy which discriminated between friends and acquaintances at levels which would have been significant if experiment-wise error had not been controlled ($p < .04$; moderate effect size), but other less theoretically important variables, such as formality, were equally powerful. Moreover, when content intimacy was considered in conjunction with mutual knowledge and continuity, the two most powerful predictors, it did not add significant predictive power. Rather than concluding that content intimacy is an overrated variable in interpersonal communication, the more justifiable conclusion is that there are several other relatively underrated variables.

An alternative explanation that would preserve the importance of content intimacy is that it is partially confounded with mutual knowledge and gets 'cheated' out of some of the variance it deserves. Note that the definition of content intimacy used to code (cited above) includes demographic information, which is a form

of mutual knowledge. Consider also that content intimacy was given more often in Study I as a reason to believe the conversational partners were acquaintances rather than friends. 'Name-rank-serial number' conversation can be seen as either evidence that the partners do not know much about one another or that they are engaging in superficial self-disclosure. This explanation seems unlikely, however, when one considers that the type of mutual knowledge that is confounded with self-disclosure, biographical information, was not by itself a significant predictor of friends or acquaintances in Study II.

The overall pattern of results was also consistent with the findings of Study I. Although only four variables were statistically significant when experiment-wise error was controlled, the pattern of results was significant. This indicates that there is a host of minor behaviors that also may distinguish friends' from acquaintances' conversations. The analyses done in this study were based on only thirty-six conversations, so power to detect differences was limited, but the findings are suggestive. Of the thirty-three variables analyzed, twenty-nine were consistent in direction with the reasons found in Study I. The most significant of these in terms of effect size, when each is considered alone were: *formality* (No. 25), *references to we/us/our* (No. 30), *number of topics* (No. 13) and *verbal reinforcers* (No. 20), *mutual friends* (No. 33) and *room-mates/lovers* (No. 35).

Several other variables also warrant further investigation, not only because they have implications for communication in personal relationships, but also because they have implications for conversation and discourse analysis in general. Among these are distribution of *floortime* (No. 1), number of *interruptions* (No. 3), *pace* (No. 8), *laughter* (No. 9), *number of questions* (No. 11), *negative judgments* (No. 21) and *disagreements* (No. 22). If these variables prove to vary by relationship, this factor needs to be taken into account in analyzing conversations. For example, researchers studying interruptions should not assume that findings based on conversations between acquaintances will generalize to conversations between friends.

Finally, several of the reasons given in Study I that were more general and impressionistic (such as *relaxation* (No. 26), *formality* (No. 25) and *involvement* (No. 27) could not be coded reliably in this study. When a larger number of judges (about 25) was asked to rate the conversations directly on these variables, their ratings

did not discriminate well between friends and acquaintances. All but one, however, (*feedback* (No. 20), as discussed earlier) were in the direction predicted. Thus, the naive judges in Study I may have tapped into valid differences, but we were unable to pin them down with any clarity or rigor in this study.

Conclusions

In the introduction to this study, three reasons were given for coding specific observed behaviors in Study II, in addition to ana- lyzing perceptions of friends' and acquaintances' conversations as was done in Study I. Now we return to those reasons. The first reason was that the naive judges in Study I gave reasons for *believ- ing* that the conversations were between friends and acquaintances but they did not really know if they were right. In fact, they were wrong about 20 percent of the time. In Study II, coders did not know the relationship between the partners either, but statistical analyses were based on what the partners in the conversation said their relationship was (friends or acquaintances) rather than on what observers believed it was. In general, coded differences were consistent with perceptions. Accuracy was about 80 percent in both cases, indicating that there was some indeterminacy in classi- fying the conversations either way it was done. The pattern of results was also consistent across both studies, although some possible exceptions (i.e. for *floortime, interruptions, pace* and *feed- back*) warrant further investigation.

The second reason to code behaviors was to determine if a smaller number of variables than the twenty-eight found in Study I could discriminate friends from acquaintances. This was clearly the case. *Mutual knowledge* and *continuity* together predicted the differences as well as a larger set would, given the limitations of power in this study. Our interpretation of this finding is that there may be a large number of variables that distinguish some friends' from some acquaintances' conversations, but *mutual knowledge* and *continuity* are both common and important discriminators. *Content intimacy* was important in Study I but less important in Study II. As discussed earlier, this could be because it does not distinguish friends' from acquaintances' conversations as well as people believe it does, because it is confounded with the *mutual knowledge*, or because it is simply difficult to identify reliably.

The third reason to code behaviors was to get a clearer idea about how friend/acquaintance differences are manifested concretely in interaction. Many examples of these behaviors for *mutual knowledge* and *continuity* were given in the Discussion section, including the various types of mutual knowledge. Of the other less powerful behaviors coded in this study, twelve were also identified reliably in the conversations (see operational definitions and examples in Table 1). A number of other variables, however, were not. These included many general, impressionistic variables such as *hesitant/spontaneous, formal/informal* and *relaxed/not relaxed*. Notably, *content intimacy* could not be identified reliably by the coders in this study. In future research the question of how these variables are manifested in conversations could be pursued by starting with naive judges' ratings of conversations on these dimensions and trying to determine what concrete behaviors led to them. Based on the experience of the coders in this study, the behaviors will be complex combinations of observable behaviors which may even vary from conversation to conversation.

Finally, the findings of this study corroborate most of the implications for theory that were discussed in Study I. Most importantly, *mutual knowledge* has been noted by a number of theorists in relationship studies (e.g. Berger, 1988; Knapp, 1984) and in linguistics (e.g. Clark, 1985; Nofsinger, 1989; Smith, 1982). Yet considering how powerfully it is manifested in interactions between intimates, its importance has been underrated. Further investigations of *mutual knowledge* should pursue questions such as how people develop and maintain mutual knowledge, how they adapt their conversations to each other's knowledge, how they make errors in using it and how they take it for granted in conversation with intimates.

Our findings also corroborate Hinde's (1979) recognition of the importance of *continuity* in relationships. Continuity is not only what links separate interactions into a relationship, but it is often manifested concretely in specific interactions. We often assume that any given conversation is a snapshot which captures nothing of the partners' ongoing relationship. While the snapshot metaphor may be basically accurate, the continuity observed in these conversations suggests that the camera does pan a bit into the past, a bit into the future and along a continuous present. These links to past, future and a continuous present are integral parts of how people with ongoing relationships talk to one another.

The important exception to the conclusions drawn in Study I pertains to *content intimacy*. In Study I, we concluded that 'the findings of this study add one brick and a little mortar to an already substantial edifice of research supporting differences between friends' and acquaintances' conversations in breadth and depth of self-disclosure'. Study II has chipped away at that mortar. On the one hand, naive judges' ratings of *content intimacy* showed a moderate effect size in discriminating friends' from acquaintances' conversation (albeit a statistically non-significant effect given experiment-wise error). On the other hand, coders were unable to identify reliably even three levels of *content intimacy* (intimate/superficial) across the thirty-six conversations and it did not predict friend/acquaintance differences when added to the two more powerful variables, *mutual knowledge* and *continuity*. Our sense is that Duck et al. (1991) have it right; intimate self-disclosure is much less common in everyday interaction than we think it is.

REFERENCES

Altman, I. & Taylor, D.A. (1973) *Social Penetration*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Berger, C.R. (1988) 'Uncertainty and Information Exchange in Developing Relationships', in S.W. Duck (ed.) *Handbook of Personal Relationships*. New York: Wiley.

Clark, H.H. (1985) 'Language Use and Language Users', in G. Lindzey & E. Aronson (eds) *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. II. New York: Random.

Cohen, J. (1977) *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*, rev. edn. New York: Academic Press.

Duck, S.W., Rutt, D.J., Hurst, M.H. & Strejc, H. (1991) 'Some Evident Truths about Conversation in Everyday Relationships: All Communications are not Created Equally', *Human Communication Research* 18: 228–67.

Hinde, R.A. (1979) *Towards Understanding Relationships*. London: Academic Press.

Knapp, M.L. (1984) *Interpersonal Communication and Human Relationships*. Newton, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

McLaughlin, M.L. (1980) 'Discriminant Analysis in Communication Research', in P.R. Monge & J.N. Cappella (eds) *Multivariate Techniques in Human Communication Research*, New York: Academic Press pp. 175–204.

Nofsinger, R.E. (1989) 'Collaborating on Context: Invoking Alluded-to Shared Knowledge', *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53: 225–41.

Planalp, S. & Benson, A. (1992) 'Friends' and Acquaintances' Conversations I: Perceived Differences', *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 9: 483–506.

Smith, N.V. (ed.) (1982) *Mutual Knowledge*. London: Academic Press.