

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EMOTIONAL FACTORS  
WHICH INHIBIT OR ENHANCE ASSERTIVENESS

by

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B. A., Simon Fraser University, 1982

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS (EDUCATION)  
in the Faculty  
of  
Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

March, 1985

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An Investigation Into The Emotional Factors Which Inhibit or

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## ABSTRACT

### AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EMOTIONAL FACTORS WHICH INHIBIT OR ENHANCE ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness involves exercising personal rights and expressing feelings, thoughts, and beliefs directly, honestly, and appropriately, without denying the rights of others. It is a process, then, which is made up of several parts: a behavioral act, the feelings one has, what one thinks (the cognitive frame), and the context (appropriateness) of a particular situation. A review of the literature revealed that the emotional, cognitive, and situational variables of assertiveness have been deemphasized by most researchers and training models, yet evidence was found in the literature which indicated that the presence or absence of these other factors may enhance or inhibit assertiveness. It was the purpose of this investigation to explore the emotional variables that affect assertive behavior.

Fourteen female subjects who were identified by the researcher to be articulate, introspective, sincere, and able to express a genuine awareness of assertive related interactions were selected. Subjects were requested to complete questions that related to five assertive and five nonassertive situations.

The research instrument used in this investigation was a structured journal. The data from the journals were collated and interpreted within the conceptual framework of a humanistic per-

spective in general and Raths' Needs Theory in particular. It was found that emotional factors played a consistent and functional role in assertive and nonassertive acts. The emotional factors reported by the subjects were also found to relate closely to the factors Raths associated with individuals with emotional needs that were either being met or unmet.

From subjects' reports, fear of rejection was involved in situations in which the subject was unable to act assertively. In situations in which subjects reported an ability to act assertively, no fear of rejection, a willingness to risk rejection, or a strategy to protect oneself against rejection were the three primary enhancing factors.

These findings led the investigator to conclude that a reconsideration (by researchers and assertiveness trainers) of the conceptualization of the assertiveness paradigm and of the training model may be in order.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I want to thank Selma, my mother and father, Dave, and Sarah, for the guidance, encouragement, courage, reflection, and purpose they gave me. Mostly, I would like to thank myself, without whose faith this could never have been written.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Annie slumped into the sofa, quietly seething. She had been working very hard lately and had just begun to treat herself to a relaxing morning at home when her neighbour called to ask if she would watch her son while she went to a meeting. Torn, Annie reluctantly agreed. She said, "Yes", because she did not want to inconvenience or upset her neighbour. She told herself that spending the morning reading while her friend needed a favour would be selfish. Wondering, however, when she would ever get some time to herself, Annie began to feel disappointment, resentment, and disgust with herself.

The example of Annie, a typical candidate for assertiveness training, speaks for countless people who are unable to put limits on what they are willing to do for others, and who consequently submit to the will of others. Situations which require assertive behavior abound in our culture, and for those who have learned to experience life by pleasing others, these situations often result in frustration, feelings of helplessness, and an eroding sense of self-esteem (Jakubowski, 1979).

Assertiveness training has "the status of an established method of producing significant [therapeutic] changes in people's lives" (Stoain, 1978, p. 1). The process involves exercising personal rights and expressing feelings, thoughts, and beliefs

directly, honestly, and appropriately, without denying the rights of others (Lange and Jakubowski, 1976, p. 7). What this definition implies is that assertiveness has several parts: a behavioral act, the feelings one has about oneself, what one thinks (the cognitive frame), and the context (appropriateness) of a particular situation.

Since assertiveness has its roots in behaviorism (Rich and Schroeder, 1976), it follows that a wide variety of behavioral techniques have been used to increase assertiveness. Although assertion is defined as being composed of behavioral, cognitive, emotional and situational variables, the focus in assertiveness training and assertiveness research, is on overt behavior. The assumption underlying behavioral techniques is that nonassertion is the result of having learned inappropriate responses and that assertiveness, therefore, can be cultivated by teaching new responses through such methods as reinforcement, modeling, and role playing.

A typical assertiveness training program for Annie might include various response-making exercises. Annie would be taught the difference between aggression, assertion, and submission, and would be prepared to formulate new, assertively correct responses. In short, Annie would learn what to say and how to behave in order to be assertive. But, what if this was not enough? What if even after learning what to say and how to say it, Annie still could not be assertive? What if it was not the behavioral factor (making a response) that inhibited her assertion? What if what inhibited Annie's assertion related instead to cognitive, emotional or situational factors?

Evidence has shown that it is frequently the case that learning the technically correct response is not always enough to increase assertiveness and that other factors must be taken into account in order to have an affect on nonassertion (Shainess, 1984). Rich and Schroeder (1976) point out that a response deficit is only one of the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

"First, an individual may be unassertive because although he or she possesses a set of potentially effective responses, he or she fails to discriminate adequately the situations for which a given response is likely to be effective. Second, lack of assertiveness may be due to the strength of emotional or cognitive variables (e.g., anxiety, self-depreciation) that inhibit the expression of assertive responses present in one's response repertoire. Third, the requisite assertive responses may not be present in the individual's response repertoire" (p. 1085).

It is important to note that these three primary reasons which in their deficit form represent nonassertion, when present, represent the components that make up assertion.

Although the majority of existing assertiveness training programs primarily teach a set of assertive responses, it is only in the third condition mentioned above that the learning of new responses is required (Ibid). A review of the literature reveals that "emotional or cognitive variables", and the issue of response discrimination (in other words, appropriateness), are deemphasized.

That certain elements which are related to assertion and/or nonassertion are unattended to in the majority of existing research on assertiveness has certain implications. If there are three primary factors related to nonassertion, and assertiveness training programs deal with only one of these factors (e.g., response deficits), it would appear that for individuals whose

assertiveness is inhibited by other than response deficits, assertiveness training may be inadequate at best, and perhaps potentially frustrating or even hurtful in some cases.

When one goes beyond the behavioral component and considers the possible emotional or cognitive variables in Annie's case, what may surface may be a need to please others primarily rather than oneself. Annie's sense of obligation may have won over her need to have some time alone. One wonders if her ability to be assertive was inhibited not by a lack of a response, but by her need to satisfy others.

Individuals like Annie, who do not ask themselves, "What do I need?" lose access to their "genuine self", and their behavior appears to pivot around the needs of others (Shainess, 1984). Rogers (1961) explained that people who have learned to live according to other's expectations do so out of a fear that people will find out, "I'm no good." What these individuals have come to believe goes something like this: "I ought to be good, and I can be good by doing what others want me to. If I don't do what they want me to, they'll discover I'm no good and they won't like me." At a deeper level, what may be at stake for Annie is a fear of rejection. This fear may be strong enough to inhibit any assertively correct response that may be present in her behavioral repertoire. One wonders, then, whether an assertiveness training program that focused on response deficits, ignoring other possible factors which might interfere with one's ability to operate assertively, might do little for people like Annie.

In addition to the deemphasis placed on emotional and cognitive variables, the possible inadequacy of assertiveness training which deals with response deficits can be illustrated again when one considers the response discrimination (appropriateness) component of nonassertion. Suppose an individual knows what to say in order to be assertive; s/he has the emotional and cognitive capacity to stand up for her/himself; but s/he is unable to discriminate where and when assertiveness is appropriate. A classic example is the individual who rushes off to be "assertive", saying anything to anybody under the guise of being "open" and "honest". This person, whose behavior may appear to be more aggressive than assertive, may use up a great deal of energy reacting to every incident with pat assertive statements, and may have little concern for the consequences of his/her "assertive" actions.

A less extreme and perhaps more common example of this condition for nonassertion is the individual who does not attempt to ride roughshod over others but whose assertive responses nevertheless result in alienation. This individual, upon encountering a cranky salesperson, for example, might give an assertively correct response by saying, "When I shop here, I expect to be talked to in a pleasant manner." Depending upon the salesperson's level of frustration, s/he may either correct or escalate his/her behavior. One needs only to imagine how it must feel at the end of an eight-hour day in a retail store to realize that the chances of the salesperson responding favourably to this assertive response are slim. A more likely response from the salesperson

might be a frigid glare, clenched teeth, and silence. A more appropriate and parsimonious response from the customer might be, "Gee, it sounds as though you've had a pretty rough day. It must be hard to stay pleasant all the time." One can imagine that this response might have a more positive effect on both the salesperson and the customer. This kind of response, that Jakubowski (1979) refers to as being "empathically assertive", requires more than knowing what to say. It requires the ability to account for one's own needs as well as the needs of the person receiving the response.

Out of behaviorism and social learning theory have come many useful and successful techniques for increasing assertiveness. However, as has been suggested by the hypothetical examples above, the traditional explanation that response deficits are responsible for nonassertion may be insufficient.

## I. THE PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATION

Whether other factors besides response deficits inhibit or enhance assertiveness is a question that has been relatively ignored in the literature on assertiveness. Emotional, cognitive, and situational factors have received little attention. The question of whether other factors play a role in assertiveness is an important one which has implications for assertiveness training in general, as well as its theoretical underpinnings. It is the purpose of this investigation to explore the emotional variables that may interfere with or enhance assertive behavior. The principle vehicle to be used in conducting this research is the questionnaire in the form of a structured journal.



In order to explore the emotional variables that inhibit or enhance assertiveness, a number of associated questions need to be addressed:

1. How will the data be gathered?
2. How will the sample population be chosen?
3. How will variables be determined?
4. What theoretical considerations should be addressed in order to fully understand the implications that may stem from the results?
5. To what extent might the investigator's biases influence the data gathering and how can this bias be minimized?
6. What are the ethical considerations surrounding this study?

## II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Assertiveness: a process which involves exercising personal rights and expressing feelings, thoughts, and beliefs directly, honestly, and appropriately, without denying the rights of others (Lange and Jakubowski, 1976, p. 7). A means of expressing oneself that leads to the development of mutual respect with others. (Jakubowski and Lange, 1978).

Aggressiveness: a process which involves meeting one's own needs without regard for the needs of others. A means of expressing oneself that leads to alienation of others (Ibid).

Nonassertion: a process which involves meeting the needs of others without regard for one's own needs. A means of expressing oneself that leads to an eroding sense of self-esteem (Ibid).

### III. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire is one of the techniques used in survey research. A survey is a method of gathering data which consists of asking particular questions of a cross-section of people that represents, as closely as possible, the population in question at a given point in time (Bailey, 1978). A questionnaire is an "instrument of communication, a two-way conversation between the respondent and the survey researcher (Labaw, 1980, p. 10).

Questionnaires have proved to be both economical and useful for collecting large masses of data (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982). When compared to the interview, questionnaires may generate even more candid responses than an interview (McDonagh, 1965, p. 132).

The approach taken in the present study was of an exploratory nature which involved looking at the emotional factors involved in assertiveness. Because the behavioral model provided no means with which to observe anything other than overt behavior, an alternative theoretical perspective was required. This involved looking at assertiveness in a new way, and can, therefore, be looked upon as new research. The questionnaire was used in the present study to accomplish what Carl Rogers (1961) stated as the first step in new research: "...to steep oneself in the events, to approach the phenomena with as few preconceptions as possible, to take a naturalistic's observational, descriptive approach to these events, and to draw forth those low-level inferences which seem most native to the material itself" (p. 128).

#### IV. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. The questionnaire (structured journal), as a research tool, can provide a framework within which the factors that enhance and/or inhibit assertiveness can be examined.

2. The subject's ability to be articulate, introspective, and sincere in their responses to questions about assertiveness can be identified from the researcher's personal knowledge of the subject.

#### V. DELIMITATIONS

1. The study was carried out between November, 1984 and December, 1984, with a group of subject's selected by the researcher who met the following criteria:

- a. The subject should be identified by the researcher to be articulate, introspective, and sincere in her ability to express a genuine awareness of assertive related interactions.
- b. The subject should be female and be at least 25 years of age.
- c. The subject should have no current major emotional difficulties.

2. The subjects had the questionnaire for the four week duration of the study.

3. The questionnaires, in the form of a structured journal, required the respondents to make a certain number of entries related to assertive interactions during the four week period.

4. Interpretation of the data was carried out within a conceptual framework derived from Raths' Needs Theory.

In summary, the traditional explanation that response variables are responsible for nonassertion may not be sufficient. It was the purpose of this investigation to explore from an alternative theoretical perspective, the emotional variables that interfere with or enhance assertiveness. A structured journal was used to collect the data which were interpreted within the conceptual framework derived from Raths' Needs Theory.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What follows in this chapter is: a) the rationale for the use of a humanistic perspective; b) a summary of Raths' Needs Theory which provided the conceptual framework for this study; c) a review of the professional literature on assertiveness, and; d) a review of the popular literature on assertiveness.

#### I. RATIONALE FOR A HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Behavior can be explained from several different points of view (e.g., neurobiological, behavioral, psychoanalytical, phenomenological, cognitive, etc.). Assertiveness training has been primarily based upon the behavioristic notion that our social behavior is learned, and that unproductive behaviors can, therefore, be unlearned. The individual, through the behavioristic lens, is understood in terms of what one does (his/her behavior), rather than what goes on inside the organism. Most assertive techniques focus on overt behavior in general and on skills in communicating directly, honestly, and appropriately in particular. The behavioristic approach has been shown to be useful in situations in which the trainee's lack of assertion relates to response deficits (Hersen, Eisler, and Miller, 1973). However, evidence has shown that it is frequently the case that learning communication skills is not always enough to increase assertiveness and that all the components that make up assertiveness must be taken into account in order to have an effect on nonassertion (Shainess, 1984). It may be, that in terms of emotional, cognitive, and sit-

uational factors, a behavioral approach alone is inadequate, and that by exploring these components from an alternative point of view, our understanding of them may be enlarged. In other words, a view of assertiveness which enables the trainer to account for and accomodate in an integrated fashion, all of the essential components of an assertive act may be more useful.

Of interest in this investigation are the emotional factors which may be involved in nonassertion. It is the belief of this investigator that as the emotional factors are better understood, that knowledge may contribute to our more humanistic perspective of assertiveness and thus enable us to work more productively to enhance assertion.

Unlike behaviorism alone, which focuses on making up the deficits in a process of faulty learning, humanism works to contribute to our understanding of behavior in terms of an individual's perception of him/herself, his/her immediate experience, and his/her personal view of the world. A fundamental concept in the humanistic perspective is the natural tendency of humans to strive toward self-actualization. A humanistic approach allows one to explore the self, including ideas about self-worth, personal needs, feelings, and goals. The appropriateness of adding a humanistic perspective to the understanding of assertiveness seems to be strongly fortified by Phelps (in Alberti, 1977): "Because assertion is a very personal, rather than mechanical learning experience, it is necessary for you first to know yourself so that you can adapt assertion to your own particular needs" (p. 151); and McPhail (in Alberti, 1977): "Allowing and respecting one's

own feelings and needs is a vital precondition to effective assertiveness" (p. 219); and finally, by Alberti (1977) who stated that assertiveness requires "looking inside and discovering what I really want which begins to lay bare dreams, ambitions, and values that were all covered up by the expectancies of significant others..." (p. 55).

## II. RATHS' NEEDS THEORY

Under the umbrella of humanism are numerous theories that share the belief in the human potential for self-direction. Raths' Theory of Emotional Needs is one of these theories.

According to Raths' Needs Theory, there are certain "vital constituents" to one's sense of well being. In order for an individual to be free to learn and to realize his/her full potential, one must have good health, emotional security, an ability to do his/her own thinking, a sense of values and beliefs, and a sense of having some power (influence) in the world (Raths, 1972).

In the course of human growth and development, an individual acquires certain emotional needs. S/he learns to need: 1) a feeling of belonging; 2) a sense of achievement; 3) economic security; 4) to be free from fear; 5) love and affection; 6) to be free from intense feelings of guilt; 7) self-respect; and 8) self-understanding. When these needs are not being met, an individual's behavior is affected in many ways:

1. Need for belonging: When an individual does not feel a sense of belonging, s/he feels rejected, helpless, as though there is something wrong with him/her, and has feelings of decreased personal worth.

2. Need for achievement: When an individual does not feel a sense of achievement, s/he begins to believe that others are smarter or superior, s/he becomes dissatisfied with his/her own accomplishments, shies away from situations in which his/her ability may come into question, and feels poorly prepared to handle challenging situations.

3. Need for economic security: Economic security does not refer to wealth or any particular standard of living. Instead, it refers to a sense of certainty that one's way of life will likely continue. When an individual does not feel a sense of economic security, s/he may become possessive, may be ashamed about his/her lifestyle, and the feeling that his/her lifestyle is tenuous is likely to result in worry and anxiety.

4. Need to be free from fear: An individual who is not free from undue fear tends to have low self-confidence, fears people who are perceived by him/her as having authority, and is afraid of what others may say or think about him/her. This person would rather play it safe than to take risks or to try new things.

5. Need for love and affection: An individual who has a need for love and affection tends to be overly sensitive. His/her feelings are hurt easily, s/he feels unwanted, rejected, and has low self-confidence.

6. Need to be free from intense feelings of guilt: "To be overwhelmed with deep feelings of guilt means a debasing of ourselves" (Raths, 1972, p. 53). One feels small, inadequate, and incompetent. An individual who feels guilty is self-conscious and may worry unduly, and may blame him/herself. This person



shows signs of indecision, fearfulness, and anxiety. S/he has low self-respect, demands constant reassurance, and is terrified of doing something wrong.

7. Need for self-respect: An individual with a sense of low self-respect has little faith in his/her own judgement, permitting others to push him/her aside. Because this individual feels inadequate and believes his/her ideas are not worthwhile, s/he tends to place other's needs over his/her own.

8. Need for self-understanding: An individual with an incoherent sense of understanding of him/herself, tends to have a poor self-concept, to be bewildered and easily mixed up by others, and frustrated by his/her lack of understanding of things and situations.

☉ Emotional insecurity is the result of one or more of the above emotional needs being unmet, and is manifested by one or more of the following behaviors: 1) aggression; 2) withdrawal; 3) regression; 4) submission; and 5) psychosomatic illness. Normally, individuals vary in their behavior from situation to situation. For example, one may be aggressive in situations involving strangers, and passive in situations involving friends. Individuals who do not vary in their behavior, and who behave in a general way in most situations are described by Raths as fitting "characteristically" into one of the following categories:

#### Aggression

An individual who is "characteristically" aggressive may express his/her aggression either subtly or overtly. The goal of his/her behavior appears to be to dominate and over-power

others. In order to uphold his/her claims of superiority, s/he tends to tease, belittle, and humiliate others. This may be accomplished through the use of aggressive language (e.g., a loud voice, fast speech, yelling, or swearing), and/or through overt behavior (e.g., pushing, hitting, throwing, or hurting), directed toward others or toward property. Aggressive people may be extremely defensive, hostile, quarrelsome, and belligerent and are often considered by others to be thoughtless, rude, and pompous. Their behavior may include threats of revenge (e.g., blaming others for their anger), cruelty, and even outbursts of violence.

#### Submission

An individual who is characteristically submissive is one who seems to have given up. It is as though s/he has no sense of having any influence in his/her life. Since s/he is unusually compliant to the wishes of others, and s/he is unable to make his/her own decisions, his/her behavior becomes reactive rather than proactive. The submissive individual tends to feel inadequate and has low self-respect. When s/he does want something, s/he may get his/her way indirectly through whinning or crying. Other descriptors include: self-denying, inhibited, and timid.

#### Withdrawing

A withdrawn individual is one who characteristically tends to avoid social contacts either by maintaining an isolating position (e.g., the seat at the back of the room), or by spending inordinate amounts of time in solitary rather than participatory projects. This individual is considered by others to

to be a loner. S/he does not appear to have any real friends.

### Regression

Regressive behavior is more often associated with children, but is also seen in adults under great stress and feelings of diminished capabilities. These individuals characteristically deal with the frustration of not having their needs met by reverting to an earlier stage of emotional development. It is not unusual for regressive children to revert to bed wetting, thumb-sucking, and baby talk. Regression in an adult may likely manifest itself through crying a lot, throwing tantrums, and/or excessive craving for attention and affection, or in other ways acting like a child.

### Psychosomatic Illness

Psychosomatic illness requires a doctor's diagnosis. These are illnesses such as chronic stomach aches, rashes, dizziness, and various bodily pains (e.g., back ache, pains in the arms or legs, etc.) which are associated with particular events rather than organic causes. These are, according to Raths, related to the frustration of emotional needs being unmet. Psychosomatic illnesses can range in severity from recurring headaches to respiratory illnesses, ulcers, speech defects, to a tendency toward diabetes and even cancer.

It was not of interest in the present study to classify subjects according to any particular need or characteristic mode of behaving, but rather to use the eight needs laid out by Raths as a means of identifying the emotional components of assertiveness.

### III. REVIEW OF THE PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE

Numerous studies, articles, and books (both popular and professional) have been written about assertiveness. Most of these are from a behavioristic perspective. What follows is a review of the professional literature which has been set out under the following headings:

- A. Historical perspective
- B. The measurement of assertiveness
- C. Discussion of the measurement of assertiveness
- D. The treatment of assertiveness
- E. Discussion of the treatment of assertiveness

#### Historical Perspective

Although assertiveness training originated with the work of A. Salter (1949), the term assertiveness as we know it today spawned out of the social fear hypothesis formulated by Wolpe (1958) which states that: 1) individuals have difficulty expressing feelings, wants and desires because they are fearful or anxious to do so; and 2) that anger and anxiety are physiologically antagonistic and that anxiety may be reciprocally inhibited by anger (Rychlak, 1973). Although this description suggests that aggressiveness and assertiveness are equated, Wolpe saw assertive behavior as including the expression of affection and friendliness as well as anger and irritation (Ibid). Assertiveness training, according to Wolpe, included: 1) the reassurance on the part of the trainer that one has the right to make demands of others; 2) specific recommendations about what one might say or do in specific situations; and 3) behavioral rehearsal to

practice the suggested behaviors.

If a client remained too fearful to act assertively in a specific situation, Wolpe attempted to remove anxiety from the client's behavioral repertoire through systematic desensitization.

Systematic desensitization included the following steps:

1. The client is taught to master a skill in muscle relaxation.

2. An anxiety hierarchy is constructed which lists situations in descending order according to the amount of anxiety each situation evokes.

3. Beginning with the least anxiety-provoking situation, the client is encouraged to fantasize him/herself in the situation and to use the muscle relaxation skills learned to gain a sense of calmness.

4. Once desensitization is achieved in the least anxiety producing situation, the client is moved up to the next level in the hierarchy, then to the next, and so on until the most anxiety producing situation can be imagined without anxiety (Ibid).

Wolpe's original hypothesis states that anxiety can be reduced directly through aggressiveness. It is curious how systematic desensitization fits into this theme since what appears to be happening in this process is that anxiety is being reduced directly through relaxation and not aggressiveness.

The work of Salter and Wolpe established the theoretical underpinnings upon which current assertiveness research and training are built. Alberti (1977) outlined the progressions the original theoretical base has undergone.

Interested in the work of Salter and Wolpe, but trained in the humanistic model of Carl Rogers, Emmons and Alberti (1977) blended the notions of human rights and potential to the behavioral concepts of assertiveness research. In their model, intervention remained at a behavioral level which focused on response deficits, with an added aim of increasing self-esteem along with assertiveness. Other theoretical contributions made by Emmons and Alberti included the incorporation of positive expressions into the concept of assertiveness, an emphasis on the non-verbal component of assertiveness, and the ethical responsibility of assertiveness trainers (Ibid).

McFall (1970) theorized that assertion must be viewed in terms of situational-specificity, taking the position that assertiveness is not a global personality trait but rather a behavior specific to a particular situation. McFall also added the idea that assertion should be defined in terms of effect rather than intent. In other words, it is how the response is received that determines whether it is an assertive or nonassertive response, not the intention of the sender. Currently, McFall is concerned about developing an observable and measurable concept of assertiveness (Ibid).

The results of an empirical study by Anderson (in Alberti, 1977) indicated that assertiveness is a dimension of personality rather than a personality type.

Cheek (1976) added the dimension of ethnic/cultural identity to assertiveness theory, stressing the importance of this since virtually all assertiveness theory developed from

studies of white-only populations. And, unlike McFall, Cheek considers the intent, not the effect of an assertive response to be the criterion for defining the behavior (Ibid).

Despite the general use of a behavioristic perspective, there exists much diversity within the research and training of assertiveness. This diversity may relate to a lack of a solid theoretical foundation. According to Alberti (1977), "assertive behavior training is indeed a process which exists with an underdeveloped theoretical base" (p. 23). Assertiveness, having begun as a "clinical application of Pavlovian conditioning theory to neurotic disorders" (p. 50), has broadened to a point at which it has outdistanced its original theoretical underpinnings (Ibid).

#### Measurements of Assertiveness

Much attention has been given to the measurement of assertiveness. All of the following instruments to be discussed, focus on overt behavior. Prevalent instruments can be seen to fall into the categories of self-report paper and pencil measures, and role played behavioral tests.

#### Self-Report Paper and Pencil Measures

Lange and Jakubowski (1978) further divide these instruments into those that have been developed for college students and those that were developed for various non-college populations (p. 283). The former include: the Constriction Scale (Bates and Zimmerman, 1971); the Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973); the College Self-Expression Scale (Galassi, De Lo, Galassi, and Bastian, 1974); and the Conflict Resolution Inventory (McFall and Lillesand, 1971).

In an attempt to develop a much needed brief and objective measure of nonassertion that could be used as a screening scale for assertion training, Bates and Zimmerman (1971) constructed what they referred to as the Constriction Scale. This scale was based on the position that anxiety inhibits "the expression of appropriate feelings and adaptive social acts (p. 99), and the term "constriction" was used to describe a lack of assertiveness.

Initially, 600 college freshman participated as subjects in the development of the 23-item scale. These items related to various interpersonal situations which required a "yes" or "no" response from the subjects. From an initial item pool, a prototype scale was prepared, evaluated and revised before the instrument was considered to be in its final form.

Content validity was established through the ratings of three independent judges who assessed the entire collection of items. Test-retest reliability was reported as high ( $r = .79$  for one month for males and  $.91$  for one month for females). Concurrent validity was established by correlating the Constriction Scale with measures of other related constructs. For example, results of the general form of the Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (MAACL) showed constriction scores to be positively correlated with anxiety and depression, while dominance and autonomy scores from the Adjective Checklist (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965) were negatively correlated with constriction.

Despite the statistical credibility of the Constriction Scale, its unidimensional quality (it measures only anxiety) may



limit its usefulness in screening individuals for assertiveness training that focuses on factors other than anxiety (i.e., response deficits or factors relating to appropriateness).

Lange and Jakubowski (1978) refer to the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Rathus, 1973) as the most popular measurement instrument of assertiveness (p. 284). This test consists of 20 items that measure the subject's responses to general social situations and ten items that relate to specific interpersonal situations. Subjects rated themselves on these items along a six point continuum. A test-retest reliability was reported as  $r = .78$  (Stoian, 1978). Lange and Jakubowski (1978) criticized the Rathus scale because it leans toward measuring aggressiveness rather than assertiveness (p. 284). They provide the following example of one of the ten items: "There are times when I look for a good, vigorous argument" (p. 284).

The College Self-Expression Scale (Galassi, De Lo, Galassi, and Bastian, 1974) is a 50-item scale which examines assertiveness by measuring positive opinions, negative opinions, and expressions of self-denial in a variety of situations. Although it was explained that items were derived from previous measures of assertiveness by Wolpe and Lazarus (1966), how they were selected, adapted, or what they consisted of was not made clear.

Developed through extensive pilot work, the Conflict Resolution Inventory (McFall and Lillesand, 1971) measures one's ability to refuse unreasonable requests. Despite a lack of statistical analysis and information regarding the development of

this instrument, Lange and Jakubowski (1978) indicated that scores are reported to be highly related to actual behavior (p. 284). The use of this instrument in measuring general assertiveness appears inadvisable since it measures only one component of assertive behavior (ability to refuse unreasonable requests). Its development using introductory psychology students severely limits its generalizability.

Self-report pen and pencil measures of assertiveness that were developed for various non-college populations include: the Assertiveness Scale (Wolpe and Lazarus, 1966); the Assertion Inventory (Gambrill and Richey, 1975); and the Adult Self Expression Scale (Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi, 1975).

Hersen, Eisler, and Miller (1973) reviewed the Assertiveness Scale (Wolpe and Lazarus, 1966) and explained that it was developed for a clinical population. An example of the type of questions used in this scale was provided: "If a friend makes what you consider to be an unreasonable request are you able to refuse?" (p. 510). Subjects are forced into a "yes" or "no" position. This question does not appear to take into consideration the possibility that the context (which would likely vary from situation to situation) of the unreasonable request may have an affect on the subject's response. Under certain circumstances this question would be answered "yes" and under others it would be answered "no".

Although no validity or reliability data were provided, the Assertiveness Scale is used as either a source or a pre-test instrument in other studies of assertiveness (Bates and Zimmer-

man, 1971; Eisler, Miller, and Blanchard, 1975; Galassi, et al, 1974).

The Adult Self-Expression Scale (Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi, 1975) was developed in response to the problem that there existed no instrument to measure assertiveness for adults in general. The test consists of 48 items that relate to specific interpersonal situations. Questions were either influenced by or adapted from those on the College Self-Expression Scale (Galassi, et al, 1974).

Scoring was based on a five-point Likert format, and items were divided almost equally between positively and negatively worded questions. Following are examples: "Do you express anger or annoyance to your boss or supervisor when it is justified?", and; "Do you have difficulty asking a close friend to do an important favor even though it will cause them some inconvenience?" (p. 341). Several measures that establish reliability and validity are provided. That the instrument measures a wide variety of assertive behaviors is likely to aid in its ability to measure assertiveness in the general population.

According to Stoian (1978), the Assertion Inventory (Gambrill and Richey, 1975) yields three things: 1) the subject's level of discomfort within social situations; 2) the probability that a subject will perform a response within a specific social situation, and; 3) the specific social situation in which a subject desires improvements in assertiveness. However, the "psychometric evaluation of this inventory has been limited to the factor analysis of discomfort scores rather than an analysis

of the assertion dimensions" (p. 10).

### Behavioral Measures

Lange and Jakubowski (1978) described behavioral measures as involving "real-life situations which could be simulated through role play and which would elicit the kind of behavior the assertion training program is designed to increase" (p. 285). Recommended behavioral tests include: the Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Miller, and Hersen, 1973); the Revised Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Hersen, Miller, and Blanchard, 1975); and the Behavioral Role Playing Test (McFall and Marston, 1970).

The Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Miller, and Hersen, 1973) was developed on 30 male psychiatric patients and consisted of a series of videotaped role playing situations which required assertive responses on the part of the subject. Judges rated visual and auditory cues to determine an over-all assertiveness score for each subject. Subjects were pre-tested with a modified Wolpe and Lazarus Assertiveness Scale and the Willoughby Personality Schedule (which measures anxiety in interpersonal situations) and were dichotomized into high and low assertiveness groups on the basis of these results.

The components of the Behavioral Assertiveness Test were selected from lists of specific behaviors that experienced clinicians felt were related to assertiveness. These were divided into: non-verbal behavior (e.g., eye contact and smiles); speech characteristics (e.g., duration of reply, loudness of speech, latency of response, and speech fluency); and content and affect (e.g., compliance, tone, and non-compliance) (p. 297-298). Re-

sults indicated that the high assertiveness subjects differed from the low assertiveness subjects. The high assertiveness subjects were quicker to respond to interpersonal problems, used more voice volume and stronger intonation, and they were more likely to request others to change their behavior. It was not possible to distinguish statistically between the high and low assertiveness groups on the basis of eye contact, speech fluency, and smiling.

The Revised Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Hersen, Miller, and Blanchard, 1975) appeared to compensate for the major weaknesses in the original Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Miller, and Hersen, 1973). The purpose of this instrument was two-fold. First, it was developed to identify and elicit positive responses considered to be components of assertiveness; and second, to examine whether assertive behavior varies as a function of social context.

Subjects were 32 male psychiatric patients. Through the use of videotaped replays, two judges rated subjects' responses to interpersonal situations similar to those found on the original Behavioral Assertiveness Test. Results indicated that (for the sample involved) assertiveness did vary depending upon the social context of a situation. From this conclusion, the authors suggested that it would be more beneficial for clinicians to identify individual interpersonal situations in which deficits exist for their clients and to focus on increasing assertiveness in those specific areas rather than attempting to increase assertiveness in general. Interrater reliability of the ratings by

the two judges was reported as 95%. Measures of validity were not provided.

The Behavioral Role Playing Test (McFall and Marston, 1970) is perhaps the most referred to test of assertiveness (Lange and Jakubowski, 1978, p. 286). It was developed on a college population and consisted of a series of simulated refusal situations. Tape recordings of the subjects' responses to these situations were rated by two independent judges. Interrater reliabilities were reported as correlations of .92 for pre-test ratings and .95 for post-test ratings. In addition, a significant positive correlation was reported between subjects' assertive scores on the Conflict Resolution Inventory (McFall and Lillesand, 1971) and scores on the McFall and Marsten (1970) Behavioral role Playing Test (Lange and Jakubowski, 1978. p. 286).

#### Discussion of the Measurement of Assertiveness

It can be seen from the various measurement instruments reviewed that many attempts have been made to delineate the components that make up what is referred to as assertiveness. The majority of the measures from the above-described instruments appear to relate only to the subject's behavioral acts (Eisler, et al, 1973; Galassi, et al, 1974; Hersen, et al, 1973; McFall and Lillesand, 1971; and McFall and Marston, 1970), ignoring or de-emphasizing the emotional, cognitive, and situational variables that are involved in assertiveness.

Another problem related to the measurement of assertiveness is that assertiveness, as a hypothetical construct, is difficult to define precisely, as are most conceptual variables that

must be inferred from behavior. At best, assertiveness can be stated in operational terms. A good operational definition of a conceptual variable is essential to the production of measurements that are reliable and valid. However, even when hypotheses concretely define variables, the problem still remains whether the definition accurately reflects the conceptual variable. The extent to which the measurement procedures accurately reflect the conceptual variable being measured (validity) represents what appears to be a major weakness in the current literature on this topic.

#### Techniques of Assertiveness Training

"Assertive training is considered to be the treatment of choice for patients exhibiting response deficits in interpersonal relationships" (Hersen, Eisler, and Miller, 1973, p. 443). Assertiveness training has been used as a therapeutic intervention in a wide range of situations, from moderate to severe interpersonal deficits; e.g., with individuals experiencing rages and abusive outbursts (Eisler, Hersen, and Miller, 1973), with subjects having difficulty with day-to-day communication skills (Serber, 1972), with patients experiencing chronic crying spells (Rimm, 1967), with children who "act-out" (Gittleman, 1965), and with low self-confident elementary school children (Flowers and Marston, 1972).

Just as there appears to be little agreement regarding the measurement of assertiveness, there appears to be little consensus as to what constitutes assertiveness training. In the view of Lange and Jakubowski (1978), however, assertion training incor-

porates four basic procedures:

- (1) teaching people the difference between assertion and aggression and between nonassertion and politeness;
- (2) helping people identify and accept both their own personal rights and the rights of others;
- (3) reducing existing cognitive and affective obstacles to acting assertively, e.g., irrational thinking, excessive anxiety, guilt, and anger; and
- (4) developing assertive skills through active practice methods (p. 2).

When compared to one another in the following table, it can be seen that the four procedures listed by Lange and Jakubowski relate quite closely to the three primary reasons for nonassertion laid out by Rich and Schroeder (1976) on page three.

Table 1

A Comparison of Lange and Jakubowski's Assertiveness Training Procedures and Rich and Schroeder's Three Primary Reasons for Nonassertion

Rich and Schroeder	1. Appropriateness	2. Emotional/ Cognitive	3. Response Deficits
	relates to ↓	relates to ↓	relates to ↓
Lange and Jakubowski	1. Difference between assertion and aggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Identify personal rights</li> <li>. Reducing cognitive/affective obstacles</li> </ul>	4. Developing assertive skills

Lange and Jakubowski (1978) identified the major techniques used to accomplish the above-mentioned procedures in assertiveness training:

1. Behavioral rehearsal, which involves the role playing of various interpersonal situations which have been giving the subject difficulty.
2. Modeling, which is based on the assumption that



through observing a model's assertive behavior, subjects will emulate the observed behavior.

3. Feedback, which involves reinforcing desired behavior.

4. Coaching, which is a method of providing specific instructions to individuals regarding assertive behavior (p. 155).

Since all of these techniques appear to focus on overt behavior (i.e., responses), when compared to Rich and Schroeder's three primary reasons for nonassertion and Lange and Jakubowski's four training procedures, the above mentioned techniques could be arranged in the following way:

Table 2

A Comparison of Lange and Jakubowski's Assertiveness Training Procedures, Rich and Schroeder's Three Primary Reasons for Nonassertion, and Lange and Jakubowski's Four Training Techniques

Rich and Schroeder	1. Appropriateness	2. Emotional/Cognitive	3. Response Deficits
	relates to	relates to	relates to
	↓	↓	↓
Lange and Jakubowski	1. Difference between assertion and aggression	. Identify personal rights . Reducing cognitive/affective obstacles	4. Developing assertive skills
	relates to	relates to	relates to
	↓	↓	↓
Lange and Jakubowski			1. Behavioral rehearsal 2. Modeling 3. Feedback 4. Coaching

Rich and Schroeder (1976) organized treatment procedures in terms of function: 1) Response acquisition operations such as modeling and instruction; 2) Response reproduction operations such as behavioral rehearsal; 3) Response shaping and strengthening operations such as feedback through audio, video, therapist, or peer reinforcement; 4) Cognitive restructuring operations such as rational-emotive procedures, and; 5) Response transfer operations such as homework and self-monitoring.

When these treatment procedures are added to the previous comparisons, what becomes highlighted by the blank spaces, is the deemphasis or lack of attention placed on appropriateness and emotional/cognitive variables.

Table 3

A Comparison of Lange and Jakubowski's Assertiveness Training Procedures, Rich and Schroeder's Three Primary Reasons for Nonassertion, Lange and Jakubowski's Four Training Techniques, and Rich and Schroeder's Five Treatment Procedures

Rich and Schroeder	1. Appropriateness	2. Emotional/Cognitive	3. Response Deficits
	relates to	relates to	relates to
Lange and Jakubowski	1. Difference between assertion and aggression	2. Identify personal rights	4. Developing assertive skills
	relates to	relates to	relates to
Lange and Jakubowski			1. Behavioral rehearsal
			2. Modeling
			3. Feedback
			4. Coaching
	relates to	relates to	relates to
Rich and Schroeder		4. Cognitive restructuring	1. Response acquisition
			2. Response reproduction
			3. Response shaping
			5. Response transfer

In the studies reviewed below, various combinations of treatment techniques were used to teach assertiveness.

McFall and Twentyman (1973) reported on four experiments which tested the efficacy of various combinations of as-

sertiveness training techniques. In two of these experiments they found that rehearsal plus coaching produced an increase in assertiveness but that adding a component of modeling to these two treatment techniques added almost nothing to the results.

In a later experiment they re-examined the role of modeling in assertive training to determine if only specific types of nonassertion were affected by it. They compared the type of modeling used in the first two experiments with a new set of models. The basis for this approach was that the subjects in the previous experiments reported that the model's behavior was too abrupt or harsh for them to consider repeating. The results of this third experiment in which the modeling style was toned down failed to yield significant differences in assertiveness scores.

A fourth experiment was conducted to determine if a lack of realism or credibility in the modeling treatment was the cause of a lack of modeling effect in the previous three experiments. In this study they examined the effects of audio-visual against auditory training stimuli and found this to make no significant difference.

Instructional coaching in all four experiments was accomplished through the use of pre-recorded statements which explained the general principles of a particular assertive behavior in a particular situation. It was up to the subject to create behaviors that were in keeping with these principles. Behavioral rehearsal involved subjects' reviewing their own behavior through videotaped role playing situations. Modeling consisted of live

or recorded narratives made by confederates which conveyed assertive behavior.

The results of these four experiments were reported as: "rehearsal and coaching accounted for virtually all of the treatment variance. Their contributions were found to be independent and additive" (p. 213).

In what appeared to be a very comprehensive and empirically sound experiment, Young (1973) conducted a study to determine whether reinforcement (feedback) would serve to enhance the modeling effect in increasing assertiveness. The results indicated that adding verbal reinforcement to the modeling component did not significantly increase assertiveness over modeling alone. It was suggested that reinforcement may be more effective if the elements considered appropriate were explained specifically so that the subjects could have a better "understanding of the relationship between their performance and the reinforcing stimulus" (p. 319).

Hersen, Eisler, and Miller (1973) reported that modeling and instruction (coaching) were superior to instruction alone or modeling alone in increasing both verbal and nonverbal components of assertiveness. These results were based on the study of 50 male psychiatric patients and may be, therefore, more clinically than generally relevant/

Since the Behavioral Assertiveness Test (Eisler, Miller, and Hersen, 1973) was used to determine these results, they must be viewed in light of the weaknesses of this instrument which were discussed in the measurement section of this review. How-

ever, the discussion presented in this report had value in that two important advantages of using videotaped models as opposed to live or audiotaped models were explained. Videotaping guarantees that the performance of the model included all of the components of assertiveness that are important to the study, and videotaping insures that the treatment conditions remain constant from subject to subject.

In what appeared to be an extensive and well controlled experiment, Galassi (1974) studied the effectiveness of an eclectic approach to assertive training. Videotaped modeling, behavioral rehearsal, feedback, homework, and peer group support were all incorporated into one total assertiveness training package.

For the 32 college students who participated in this study, significant differences seen on the College Self-Expression Scale (Galassi, De Lo, Galassi, and Bastian, 1974) showed that subjects who received the assertiveness training package were significantly more assertive than the control subjects ( $F=7.24$ ;  $p<.005$ ). These results, as the authors pointed out, are only generalizable to college students.

Through the use of instruction and behavior rehearsal with 57 college women, Rathus (1972) provided sound experimental evidence that assertiveness training increased the reporting of and the exhibiting of assertive behavior. Nine types of assertive tasks were explained to the subjects along with instructions regarding ways that they could be practiced.

The assertive tasks were: assertive talk (demanding

rights), feeling talk (expressing genuine feelings), greeting talk, disagreeing passively and actively, asking why, talking about oneself, agreeing with compliments, avoiding justifying opinions, and looking people in the eye. Subjects were instructed to practice 25 of these tasks each week throughout the course of the study. A self-reporting assertiveness schedule was used as the pre-and post-test instrument in which the subject's rated themselves as either characteristic or not to each of the 30 items. On the basis of a one-way analysis of variance, highly significant differences were found between the assertive training subjects and the control group subjects.

Besides studying the efficacy of the various treatment methods, researchers have investigated other aspects of assertiveness training.

Although much research has demonstrated the importance of the nonverbal message in communication, this aspect has been relatively ignored in the area of assertiveness training. Typically, the focus is on the explicit verbal message. Serber (1972), who was interested in this nonverbal component used the techniques of instruction, modeling, and behavioral rehearsal to shape assertive behavior. The selection of one or a combination of these techniques depended on the training situation of each particular individual. How the training situation for particular individuals was determined was not explained.

Nonverbal behavior was broken down into six elements: (1) loudness of voice, (2) fluency of words, (3) eye contact, (4) facial expression, (5) body position, and (6) distance from other

person. Videotaped role playing situations were used to identify an individual's deficient area which became the behavior to be modified. Subjects reviewed the taped role playing situations and the trainer pointed out the identified inappropriate (deficient) behavior. Following this, the trainer modeled an appropriate assertive response in an attempt to shape these elements into the subject's repertoire of behavior.

This study deals with what would seem to be an important concern in the area of assertiveness training. However, many aspects are left vague. For example, elements were selected for individual training situations by whether they were thought by the trainer to contribute to a "total socially meaningful behavior" (p. 182). Elements selected under such vague criteria would seem to fluctuate depending upon the value system of each particular trainer, and would make replication difficult. In this study, the author presented a case study in which he used the above techniques. Results were reported in terms such as: "His interpersonal communication improved so much..." (p. 182). With this type of evidence as the only supporting data, the researcher's conclusion that this method was successful in increasing assertiveness may require a leap in faith.

Lomont (1969) conducted a novel experimental study comparing the efficacy of group assertion training (using behavioral rehearsal) with group insight therapy. The insight therapy group "focused on exploration and interpretation of feelings and behavior" (p. 464), using a psychoanalytical framework which emphasized catharsis, freedom of expression and transference. This group



was led by a psychologist with six years' experience with this type of therapy. The leader of the assertion group also had six years' experience with assertion therapy. The focus in this group was on role playing numerous coping behaviors within a variety of situations.

The results reported were that the assertive group did increase in assertiveness appreciably more than the insight group. Assessing the validity of these results and the quality of this experiment would require an understanding of the Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory (MMPI) since the results, and a great deal of the discussion centered around this instrument.

#### Discussion of the Treatment of Assertiveness

Since there is little agreement regarding the definition or measurement of assertiveness, it is not surprising that there would exist a wide diversity of training techniques to increase assertive behavior. Despite this lack of consensus, the preceding review suggests that assertive training has been an effective treatment approach for a wide array of disorders. Why particular techniques are effective in particular situations is unclear. It is as though some common element underlying a range of disorders is affected by another common element underlying various treatment techniques. What is being alluded to here is that nonassertion appears to be a common thread underlying several seemingly unrelated disorder types, thus treatable by assertiveness training, which again appears to be a common thread which runs through seemingly diverse forms of treatment.

There are other issues which stem from this review that

require further exploration. For example, how ecologically sound are present studies to increase assertiveness? There appears to be little research which attempts to determine the amount and kind of transference of newly acquired assertive behavior across different interpersonal situations. According to Stoian (1978) studies by Hersen et al, 1974, Kazdin, 1974, 1975, 1976, McFall and Lillesand, 1971, McFall and Marston, 1970, and McFall and Twentyman, 1973, all revealed that generalization of assertiveness to untrained situations was not produced. What this means is that a trained situation such as learning how to say "No" to a telephone solicitor, for example, would not transfer to an untrained situation such as being able to return faulty merchandise to a store.

Discussions regarding this failure to demonstrate generalization center around the idea that generalization is an unlikely event because assertiveness is situation specific (Ibid). Evidence that generalization is weak along with the position that it is not to be expected in any event suggests that "the application of assertion training techniques is therefore of greater academic interest than clinical utility if only within treatment modification can be obtained" (Hersen and Bellack, 1977). It is curious that the results of weak generalization of assertive training "were not interpreted as indicating a need for more effective training procedures" (Stoian, 1978, p. 48).

There are other issues requiring further review. First, it would be of value to determine whether training techniques would be effective with populations that differed from the train-

ing subjects used in present studies in such things as intelligence and socio-economic status. Second, successful assertiveness training appears to require fundamental changes in response repertoires if permanent change is to be made in one's behavior. Patterns of response have become deeply entrenched by the time one has reached adulthood (Booraem, 1978, p. 6). This raises the question of whether such relatively short periods of treatment are long enough to be effective. The time involved in the studies reviewed here ranges from two 45-minute experimental sessions one week apart (McFall, 1973) to once a week for seven weeks (Rathus, 1972). Third, although Lange and Jakubowski (1978) attest to the belief that group training is generally more effective than individual therapy (p. 197), no research has been located by this writer that deals with this issue. Fourth, how much a subject's motivation to change influences success in assertiveness training is a question that needs to be addressed. And, finally, how trainer variables influence treatment in assertiveness training is unclear. None of the studies reviewed thus far have controlled for the influence particular trainers may have on trainees, nor was the issue of this influence addressed as either a concern or a possible limitation in existing research. Although it was beyond the scope of the present study, it would be interesting and enlightening to group studies by various treatment techniques (e.g., all those that studied the effect of modeling, all those that studied the effect of feedback, etc.) in order to have a look at differences in training techniques and trainers. What one would be doing, in effect, would be to create

a random sample of trainers. If, for example, many studies looking at modeling found modeling to significantly increase assertiveness, one would probably be safe in assuming that it was the treatment variables and not the trainer variables that affected change.

#### IV. REVIEW OF THE POPULAR LITERATURE

The popular literature on assertiveness evolved not only out of current research on assertiveness but also out of the personal growth movement of the 1960's (Salter, in Alberti, 1977). In addition to numerous articles and books on assertiveness, many assertiveness training programs have come into existence. If one were to review local ads for adult education courses over the past several years, one would discover numerous courses and workshops on assertiveness training. It is likely that these courses are offered with similar frequency in many other cities and towns throughout North America. Estimating from the number of courses offered in Vancouver, British Columbia, it would appear that hundreds of thousands of individuals are being exposed to assertiveness training in some form or another.

It is the experience of this author, having taken several assertiveness training workshops and courses, that much of the material offered in these courses is based indirectly on the research material of assertiveness and more directly on what could be referred to as the popular literature on assertiveness. These are books written with practical application in mind, in lay terms which avoid clinically oriented terminology. In many courses, these books are the suggested or required reading for participants.

One can add to the numbers of individuals being exposed to popular assertiveness training material by including those who seek knowledge on their own through books. What this suggests is that it is within the realm of popular literature on assertiveness that significant numbers of individuals are being exposed. It is because the popular literature on assertiveness is the form in which many people experience assertiveness training that it is included in this review of the literature.

Assertiveness training was first popularly presented by Robert Alberti and Michael Emmons in Your Perfect Right, in 1970. Since then there have been more than a dozen books on assertiveness training. If there exists a lack of agreement within the research realm of assertiveness training, it is understandable that even less agreement exists within the popular realm as to what constitutes assertiveness training. What can be seen from the following review, however, is that although the training techniques and "brand names" for similar procedures vary from one author to another, there appears to be a consensus on certain fundamental notions. One can see that the theoretical perspective is primarily a behavioristic one, and training consistently concentrates on responses deficits. Emotional, cognitive, and situational variables are either ignored or deemphasized.

As was earlier pointed out, a response deficit is only one of the three primary reasons for nonassertion (Rich and Schroeder, 1976). Other conditions of nonassertion which must be taken into account in teaching assertiveness relate to situational (appropriateness), cognitive, and emotional variables (Ibid).

It would appear that since there are three primary reasons for nonassertion, assertiveness training programs would in some way address each of these conditions. It is from the perspective of the three primary reasons for nonassertion listed by Rich and Schroeder (1976), that the training techniques used in each of the popular books on assertiveness were organized. In addition, each book is reviewed in terms of its definition of assertiveness, the focus of the book, and its theoretical perspective.

### Your Perfect Right

The first book on assertiveness training appeared in 1970. Written by R. E. Alberti and M. L. Emmons, Your Perfect Right, was originally designed for use in schools and mental health clinics, but was later geared to the layperson. In its popular version, the authors aimed at helping individuals to live in what they saw as our impersonal, technological society by gaining a sense of personal power through the use of assertiveness training.

Assertiveness is described as "behavior which enables a person to act in his own best interest, to stand up for himself without undue anxiety, to express his honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise his own rights without denying the rights of others..." (P. 2). Assertiveness training is seen as a means of developing "...a more adequate repertoire of assertive behavior, so that one may choose appropriate and self-fulfilling responses in a variety of situations" (p. 2).

Originally trained in the work of Carl Rogers, Alberti and Emmons blended certain humanistic ideas, (e.g., human rights

and the idea that assertiveness is related to self-esteem) to the already existing behavioral concepts of assertiveness research. However, the theoretical underpinning of their approach is clearly behavioristic. The focus is on developing assertive responses through the use of methods based on learning theory. Changes in self-esteem are seen as following changes in behavior. The authors explain: "Behavior is the component most amenable to change. Our efforts to facilitate improved interpersonal functioning and a greater valuing of yourself as a person will focus on changing your behavior patterns" (p. 34).

A distinction is made between "situationally nonassertive individuals" and "generally nonassertive individuals". The "situationally nonassertive individual" is one "whose behavior is typically adequate and self-enhancing; however, certain situations stimulate a great deal of anxiety in them which prevents fully adequate responses to that particular situation" (p. 19). The "generally nonassertive individual" is "one who finds his own self-esteem very low, and for whom very uncomfortable anxiety is generated by nearly all social situations" (p. 20). The "generally nonassertive individual" is seen to require therapy rather than assertiveness training. These concepts are also applied to aggressiveness.

Following are the approaches used in assertiveness training and how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

#### Appropriateness

The authors address the question: "What about the sig-

nificant other persons in my life; won't they object if I suddenly become more expressive?" (p. 25). It is suggested that the significant others be prepared (ideally by the facilitator in the course) of what to expect from participants, and to seek their support.

It is recommended that one use judgment in determining an appropriate occasion for an assertive response. How one actually determines these judgments is not explained. A list is provided of various situations which may be inappropriate for assertiveness (e.g., with overly sensitive individual, or with individuals having a "bad day").

#### Cognitive/Emotional

Since overt behavior is the focal point for change, none of the assertiveness training methods are directed at these variables.

#### Response Deficits

As has been stated, the primary objective in this book is to develop a repertoire of assertive responses. The training goals are:

- A. Understanding the difference between assertive, nonassertive and aggressive behavior.
- B. Understanding the nonverbal components of assertion.
- C. Expressing positive feelings.
- D. Expressing negative feelings.

Once the principles of assertion are understood, the following steps are recommended in beginning to exercise assertive behavior:



1. Observe your own behavior.
2. Keep a log of your assertive behavior for one week.
3. Fantasize being assertive in a particular situation.
4. Note the behavioral strengths and weaknesses in the imagined situation.
5. Find a role model and observe his/her behavior
6. Consider alternative responses to a nonassertive situation.
7. Imagine yourself dealing with it assertively.
8. Role play the situation.
9. Get feedback from others.
10. By repeating 7, 8, and 9, shape your responses.
11. Try your response out in real life.
12. Repeat the above procedures with other situations requiring assertion.

### Assertion Training

Written primarily as a "how-to-book" for assertiveness trainers (but also for individuals wishing to improve their own skills), Assertion Training, by Cotler and Guerra (1976) describes what the authors do in their assertiveness training courses. The course is mainly concerned with anxiety reduction and social skills training. In terms of addressing Rich and Schroeder's three primary reasons for nonassertion, this book is perhaps the most thorough.

An assertive individual "can establish close interpersonal relationships; can protect himself from being taken advan-

tage of by others; can make decisions and free choices in life; can recognize and acquire more of his interpersonal needs; and can verbally and nonverbally express a wide range of feelings and thoughts, both positive and negative. This is to be accomplished without experiencing undue amounts of anxiety or guilt and without violating the rights and dignity of others in the process" (p. 3).

The theoretical perspective of Assertion Training is described by the authors as humanistic-behavioral. It is behavioral in that the social skills component focuses on changing overt behavior. The approach is humanistic in that it involves the individual becoming aware of his/her thoughts, emotions and feelings. The approach also involves learning to like oneself and learning that only by meeting one's own needs is one able to respond to the needs of others. Clarifying and reflective empathy are the methods used to aid the individual in getting to know his/her thoughts, emotions and feelings. Once these are better known, the individual is prepared to make use of the social skills and to systematically work toward meeting his/her unique needs.

Following are the assertiveness training goals and techniques and how they relate to the three primary reasons for non-assertion:

#### Appropriateness

An individual "must be able to evaluate the situation and to discriminate when assertive behaviors will yield punitive consequences as well as benefits" (p. 6). Timing is considered

to be the important issue in appropriateness. One must not only learn what to do, but also when to do it. Skills in listening or other skills which would aid an individual in attending to the affects an assertive response might have on another individual are ignored.

### Cognitive/Emotional

The techniques which focus on the cognitive and emotional variables are as follows:

- A. Breaking down nonassertive myths.
- B. Personal interview: Through clarifying and empathy, the trainer gets to know the person and helps him/her to determine treatment depending upon the particular needs of the individual. It is only in this segment of the course that a humanistic perspective can be identified.
- C. Assertive Data Collection Package (ADCP):
  1. Self-report, paper-and-pencil measures designed from a behavioral framework used in assessment.
  2. Monitoring anxiety levels.
  3. Goal setting.
  4. Homework diary.
- D. Relaxation training.

### Response Deficits

Behavioral rehearsal, coaching, humour, and feedback are the basic components used in social skills training of the following response deficit skills:

- A. Nonverbal assertive behaviors.

- B. Conversational skills.
  - 1. Open-ended questions.
  - 2. Attending to free information.
  - 3. Self-disclosure.
  - 4. Terminating conversation.
- C. Relationship skills.
  - 1. Self-praise.
  - 2. I-statements.
  - 3. Giving and receiving compliments.
  - 4. Positive contracting.
- D. Protective skills.
  - 1. Broken record.
  - 2. Selective ignoring.
  - 3. Disarming anger.
  - 4. Sorting issues.
  - 5. Apologies.
  - 6. Fogging.
  - 7. Critical inquiry.

#### Effectiveness Training for Women

Sex roles in our society are going through a process of change. Women are now in a position to become the kind of people they want to be rather than being grounded in an identity of those who meet the needs of others. This is the position taken by Linda Adams in Effectiveness Training for Women (1979) who explains that the first step toward becoming who you want to be is to take control of your life by becoming aware of your needs

and wants. Once these needs and wants are identified, one can then begin a process of meeting them. The skills laid out are provided to help one to meet these needs and wants.

Assertiveness is referred to as "self-disclosure" which means "clear, honest, authentic communication about oneself, while at the same time preserving respect for the other person" (p. 3). "Assertive behavior means knowing what you need and want, making this clear to others, working in a self-directed way to get your needs met while showing respect for others" (p. 24). People who are assertive are "authentic, congruent, open, and direct" (p. 24).

Unlike other books on assertiveness, this author does not clearly state a theoretical perspective. On the one hand, the focus on overt behavior in the assertive skills section of the book, gives the approach a behavioral flavor. However, when one examines the chapter which outlines the helping process used in assertiveness training, one experiences a shift from a focus on overt behavior to emotional, personal, and situational factors. The theoretical perspective appears to shift to a humanistic one.

Following are the training techniques and how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

#### Appropriateness

Each response making exercise is followed by an exercise in attending to the affect that response has had on the other person.

A. Passive listening: Communicating without words that one

is paying attention to the other person.

- B. Active listening: Reflecting back in words what the other person has said in order to check out one's understanding of the message, allowing the other person to confirm or clarify one's interpretation.

### Emotional/Cognitive

Anxiety is seen as the major obstacle to assertion.

Steps to deal with anxiety involve:

- A. Recognition of the anxiety and realizing the potential of it for growth. Convert anxiety to constructive action.
- B. Create an anxiety hierarchy and begin working on low risk situations using "I-messages".
- C. Rehearse desired behavior.
- D. Practice relaxation.

### Response Deficits

- A. "I-message": A statement that describes one's feelings and/or thoughts. Three types of "I-messages" are listed:
  - 1. Responsive I-message: Used in declining a request by saying "No" and providing reasons for saying "No". It is also used to accept a request by saying "Yes" and providing reasons for saying "Yes".
  - 2. Preventitive I-message: Used to prevent conflict and misunderstandings by stating one's need and reasons for the need.
  - 3. Confrontive I-message: Used to express feelings and to describe other unacceptable behavior without judg-

ment, and to explain how other's behavior affected one.

- B. Avoiding "You-messages": Avoiding making negative judgments of others, and to focus instead on their behavior.

### Responsible Assertive Behavior

According to Lange and Jakubowski (1978) in Responsible Assertive Behavior, "...assertion involves standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in direct, honest, and appropriate ways which do not violate another person's rights" (p. 7). People behave nonassertively because they simply do not know how to act otherwise (Ibid). Through assertiveness training based on an integrated cognitive and behavioral approach, assertive skills are taught in order to replace inappropriate aggressive or nonassertive behavior.

The primary behavioral technique used to teach assertive skills is behavioral rehearsal. In class and in the homework assignments which are considered to be an integral part of the training, various forms of behavioral rehearsal (e.g., modeling, role-playing, and role reversal) provide the means of reinforcement of desired assertive behavior.

Ellis' rational-emotive approach provides the framework for the cognitive aspect of the training. This approach is based on the notion that "nonassertiveness often arises from irrational and incorrect thinking" (p. 92). According to Ellis, "people do not have direct 'emotional' reactions to most situations but rather they think first" (p. 124). Through a process of cognitive restructuring, individuals can become aware of and then

change their own thinking patterns.

Following are the assertiveness training techniques and how they relate to the three primary reasons for non-assertion:

#### Appropriateness

The importance of appropriateness is stressed. "Assertion not only calls for considerable skill in knowing how to express one's needs, but also implies full knowledge of when and when not to exercise one's rights" (p. xviii). The authors also mention "empathic assertion" which is seen as a means of allowing the speaker to understand other's feelings and to keep a fuller perspective of the situation, thus lessening the possibility of inappropriate assertion. However, although appropriateness is considered a major component of assertion throughout the book, and the authors even state clearly that "people are not assertive in a vacuum" (p. 24), none of the methods used in assertiveness training address the issue of appropriateness.

#### Cognitive/Emotional

Over the course of assertiveness training, participants are encouraged to develop an assertive belief system (an awareness of individual and human rights). This is accomplished primarily through Ellis' rational-emotive approach. Reading material on the subject of assertive rights, support and the sharing of experience from the group, trainer modeling and reinforcement, and relaxation exercises are other methods used to deal with the cognitive and emotional variables.

#### Response Deficit

It is in the area of response deficits that the bulk of



assertiveness training techniques lies. Following is a list of exercises aimed at teaching participant's how to respond:

1. Exercise in nonverbal communication.
2. Giving and receiving compliments.
3. Carrying on social conversations.
4. Contracting for in-group behavior change.
5. Discriminating between aggressive and nonassertive behavior.
6. Making and refusing requests.
7. Making statements without explanation.
8. Responding to persistent people.
9. Implosive procedures (e.g., shouting) in order to desensitize the fear of becoming angry or to experience a cathartic effect.
10. "I-language" to help assert negative feelings.
11. Broken record: a strategy of repeating over and over what one wants without getting angry.
12. Asking questions in order to check out discrepant non-verbal messages.
13. Paradoxical statement: making a statement which gives the message that the other's aggression could boomerang.

#### When I Say No I Feel Guilty

Perhaps the most well-known book on assertiveness is Manuel Smith's (1975) When I Say No I Feel Guilty, which describes assertiveness as a skill for coping with life's problems. "Being assertive is communicating to another person what you are,

what you do, what you want, what you expect of life" (p. 89).

According to Smith, one must first have an understanding of one's nonassertive beliefs and an awareness of one's assertive rights. These rights can be enforced by systematically practicing a learned set of behaviors. Despite the importance placed on understanding oneself and one's assertive rights, the book focuses almost entirely on response deficits. It appears that self-awareness is a pre-requisite to Smith's systematic assertiveness training. The lack of attention paid to appropriateness and to cognitive and emotional factors seems to render the book relatively useless to those who are unaware of their personal rights.

The techniques used in teaching assertiveness focus on overt behavior and are borrowed primarily from the behavioral arsenal (e.g., role playing, modeling, and reinforcement). The assertiveness training techniques according to how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion are as follows:

#### Appropriateness

Appropriateness is limited to situations that involve legal or physical factors. One is advised not to attempt to be assertive in situations in which one could be physically harmed or arrested.

#### Cognitive/Emotional

How one comes to understand one's nonassertive beliefs and assertive rights is not addressed in any of the discussions on assertiveness nor in the training techniques.

## Response Deficits

Following is a list of techniques aimed at teaching participant's how to respond:

1. Broken Record: a method of saying what you mean over and over without getting angry.
2. Free Information: listening to clues others give about themselves and building conversations around them.
3. Self-Disclosure: giving out information regarding oneself.
4. Fogging: used to cope with manipulative criticism by agreeing with the true part of a criticism.
5. Negative Assertion: coping with bonafide criticism by responding to the truth.
6. Negative Inquiry: a non-critical clarifying response requiring the other person to examine criticisms made by him/her.
7. Assertion With Empathy: used only with people one cares for. It involves expressing one's own point of view without diminishing the other's self-respect. However, how this is done is never explained and the examples which are provided do not appear to illustrate empathy.

## The New Assertive Woman

Bloom (1975) describes her book as a "how-to-manual" for women wishing to cure the powerlessness they may be experiencing in interpersonal relations. It is suggested that assertiveness can be accomplished through an ability to recognize nonassertion

(through anecdotes of assertive encounters offered in the book), through an awareness of one's personal rights (a list of these rights is provided), and through various exercises aimed at replacing nonassertion with assertiveness.

Assertiveness, which is defined as a direct and honest way of communicating and dealing with conflict, is approached primarily from a behavioristic perspective. Assertiveness training begins by changing the behavior which is followed by a cyclical process of change. Once assertive behavior is tried and found to bring positive results, one begins to feel better about oneself. The better one feels, the less anxious one becomes. The less anxious one is, the more able one is to be assertive. The more assertive one is, the better one feels, etc.

Assertive training is accomplished primarily through role playing and the use of multiple choice quizzes on assertive, aggressive, and passive responses. Trying out assertiveness in real-life situations and feedback from the assertiveness training group are also presented as important components of assertiveness training. Following are the techniques used according to how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

#### Appropriateness

It is pointed out that "there is often more to assertion than merely saying what you want" (p. 163). Timing, words, body language, and an awareness of what is going on for the other person as well as oneself is what creates communication that is appropriate and assertive. There are two exercises used to accomplish this:

1. **Attentive Listening:** an exercise in which one is told to convey nonverbally (through eye contact, nods, and "uh-huhs") that one is paying attention. Timing and how one learns to discriminate what to pay attention to is not explained.
2. **Reflection of Content and Underlying Feelings:** by paraphrasing what others have said, one is able to communicate understanding as well as to check out one's impression of what another individual is saying.

### Cognitive/Emotional

"If we simply think about the circumstances, we will be able to identify the problem" (p. 80). Once the problems are identified, goals are established, an examination of the alternative ways of accomplishing them is made, followed by action toward them. What the author appears to be saying here is cyclical, that in order to be assertive, one needs assertive skills. Thinking about the circumstances, examining body clues, and keeping a journal are the suggested ways to learn to identify problems, but what is ignored is how one can establish goals, how one can examine alternatives, and how one can determine the specific action to be taken. Following are the techniques that relate to cognitive and emotional variables:

1. Examining body clues.
2. Keeping a journal.
3. Ellis' Irrational Beliefs.
4. Anxiety reduction.

## Response Deficits

There are no exercises that deal specifically with response deficits. However, most of the exercises are response oriented, illustrating passive, aggressive, and an alternate assertive response to various situations, in order to demonstrate the difference between these modes as well as to increase one's repertoire of responses.

## Self Assertion For Women

In Self Assertion For Women, Pamela Butler (1981) explained that in our society women are socialized in such a way that they learn to follow a "set of 'shoulds' and 'oughts' that are handed down from parent to child..." (p. 23) rather than to follow internal messages that signal personal needs and desires. Through self-assertion, which involves an awareness of social constraints and one's own feelings, accompanied by systematic practice of assertiveness techniques, one can learn to express herself as a unique individual. Assertiveness is described as free self-expression in at least four areas: 1) self-initiation, 2) negative feelings, 3) limit setting, and 4) positive feelings. "Assertiveness can be more broadly defined as the continuing statement 'This is who I am'" (p. 9).

Butler explained that the thesis of the book is behavioristic, contending that by changing the behavior, assertion will follow as well as changes in one's feelings toward oneself. Discrepant with a pure behavioristic model, however, is the author's notion that a primary step toward overcoming personal and

social constraints is "an awareness and respect for one's own feelings" (p. i). This awareness is approached in two ways: 1) through the use of a table that ranks four major areas of non-assertion along with various categories of behavior whereby one can identify areas of difficulty, who the influential people are in one's life, and the nature of that influence, and 2) through the use of Ellis' rational-emotive approach.

Following are the training techniques according to how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

#### Appropriateness

The only component that addressed the issue of appropriateness is the use of what is referred to as "muscle", which involves the matching of nonverbal language with one's intent.

#### Cognitive/Emotional

1. Awareness Table: an instrument which aids participant's in identifying individual areas of difficulty with assertion, influential people in one's life, and the nature of that influence.
2. Assertive Hierarchy: a technique involving drawing up a list of the least to the most threatening situations requiring assertion.
3. Negative Self-Talk: this method is understood in terms of Ellis' rational-emotive therapy. Participants are encouraged to identify negative thoughts in order to replace them with more rational thoughts.

#### Response Deficits

1. Participant's are asked to write five direct assertive

statements that relate to specific situations, and then to force themselves to try these out in real-life settings.

2. Negative Expression: a technique which involves role playing in order to practice expressing anger.
3. Nonverbal Assertion: a technique which involves the use of a table which is provided in order to review one's nonverbal assertion.
4. Setting Limits: defining limits clearly and rehearsing them.
5. Criticism: learning to accept valid criticism without apologizing, and learning how to disagree with erroneous criticism by fogging or requesting time to consider the criticism.

How To Be An Assertive (Not Aggressive) Woman  
In Life, In Love, and On The Job

In How To Be An Assertive (Not Aggressive) Woman in Life in Love, and On The Job, Jean Baer (1976) explained that societal pressures and family training teach women to be anxious, insecure, and submissive. For many women, assertiveness training will reduce these feelings of anxiety and insecurity and leave them in a position to achieve the roles they genuinely want. Assertiveness is seen as "...making your own choices, standing up for yourself appropriately, and having an active orientation to life. [It involves] standing up for your legitimate rights in such a way that the rights of others are not violated" (p. 20).

Baer's approach is based on behavior therapy; she is not



interested in the "why", but rather on observable behavior. She believes that in order to affect one's feelings regarding oneself, one must first change one's behavior.

Following are the techniques used according to how they relate to the three primary reasons for nonassertion:

### Appropriateness

Although appropriateness is considered by Baer's definition of assertiveness to be an important component, none of the techniques used throughout the book deal with this issue.

### Cognitive/Emotional

1. Goal Setting: using fantasies to identify goals so that one can then systematically attempt to reach them.
2. Self Image: a technique in which one fantasizes the person they would like to be, then writes down ten traits relating to that person, and then begins to work toward them. (How one "works toward" them is not explained).
3. Achieving an Assertive Social Life: Ellis' rational-emotive approach is used to alleviate fears of making social contacts. Social networking is encouraged.

### Response Deficits

In all of the exercises focusing on response deficits, role rehearsal, taped feedback, and practice in real life settings are encouraged.

1. Behavior Assignments: practice in responding to specific situations.
2. Handling Criticism, Compliments, and Anger: instructions

are provided to aid participant's in responding verbally and nonverbally to criticism and compliments. Role playing is used to practice expressing and dealing with anger.

3. **Confronting and Controlling Anxiety:** a technique which involves focusing on action and response rather than on one's feelings of anxiety.
4. **Saying No:** when using the word "no", participants are encouraged to use a firm voice and to form clear, short replies.
5. **"I-Talk":** a method which involves telling others what you want by saying what you think and feel.

What has been laid out in this chapter is the rationale for the use of a humanistic perspective in the understanding of assertiveness, an overview of Raths' Needs Theory, followed by a review of the professional and the popular literature on assertiveness.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

It was the purpose of this investigation to explore through a questionnaire, variables that interfere with or enhance assertive behavior. What follows is an account of procedures leading up to and including the distribution and collection of the questionnaire. This chapter will include the following: a) choosing the methodology; b) designing the questionnaire; c) criteria for selection of subjects; d) distribution and collection of the questionnaires, and; e) collating the data.

#### I. CHOOSING THE METHODOLOGY

Research and training in the area of assertiveness, having its roots in behaviorism, has focused primarily on the component of overt behavior. As was discussed previously (see page 2), implicit in the definition of assertiveness is the idea that it is made up of other components in addition to overt behavior (e.g., emotional, cognitive, and a component relating to appropriateness); yet, these other components have been relatively ignored. It was the purpose of this investigation to explore the emotional component of assertiveness. This type of exploration has not been found in the research literature on assertiveness, and is the kind of question that cannot begin in the laboratory (Rogers, 1961).

Carl Rogers (1961) has this to say about exploratory research:

...perhaps what is needed first is to steep oneself in the events, to approach the phenomena with as few preconceptions as possible, to take a naturalist's observational, descriptive approach to these events, and to draw forth those low-level inferences which seem most native to the material itself (p. 128).

The next step (which is beyond the scope of the present study), Rogers explained, is to "take these observations and low-level abstractions and formulate them in such a way that testable hypotheses can readily be drawn from them" (p. 129). He adds:

...scientific methodology is seen for what it truly is: a way of preventing me from deceiving myself in regard to my creatively formed subjective hunches which have been developed out of the relationship of me and my material (p. 217-218).

Others have expressed ideas similar to Rogers. What Bronfenbrenner (1976) stated regarding "quasi-experiments" appears to be applicable to the kind of exploratory research used in the present study. This kind of research:

...suggests a lower level of methodological rigor, an implication I regard as unwarranted on strictly scientific grounds. As I shall endeavor to show, there are many instances in which a design exploiting an experiment of nature provides a more critical contrast, insures greater objectivity, permits more precise and theoretically significant inferences, in short, is more elegant and constitutes 'harder' science than the best possible contrived experiment addressed to the same research question (p. 10).

And, H. W. Simons (1978) described what Thomas M. Scheidel expressed on this subject in his essay which was presented to the 1977 Western Journal of Speech Communication Symposium:

...our most fertile theories are likely to be developed by persons with a broad, perceptive, exploratory cast of mind; those able to see the 'big picture'; those willing, even; to utilize introspection or other forms of tacit knowledge (p. 22).

and that "all theories should ultimately be framed in reductionist terms that are capable of being operationalized" and finally,

"reformulated in such a way as to permit empirical tests of hypotheses" (p. 22).

Thus, it was the purpose of this investigation to begin in an exploratory manner, to study the emotional component that makes up assertiveness. Future studies might formulate observations made in this study in such a way that they could be examined empirically.

## II. DESIGNING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Certain criteria were used in selecting the research instrument. It was identified that the instrument must:

1. Provide a means of preventing as much experimenter bias as possible in collecting the data; or, as Roger's (1961) stated: "...to approach the phenomena with as few preconceptions as possible..." (p. 128).
2. Provide a means of distilling information regarding each of the variables that make up assertiveness.
3. Provide a means of juxtaposing the variables in assertive situations with those in nonassertive situations, thus providing a binocular (depth of field) effect.
4. Provide a means of utilizing introspection on the part of the subjects regarding their assertive behavior.

It was thought that a type of questionnaire (a structured journal) could best meet the above criteria. By borrowing from and adding to questions used in journal exercises given at various assertiveness training workshops collected by the investigator, a list of questions was constructed that related to each of the components involved in assertion. It was thought that the

emotional component could be best understood if it were presented in the context of the other factors involved in assertion. These questions, in one form or another, appear to be commonly used as optional homework assignments in many assertiveness training courses. Sudman (1982) suggested that it is advantageous to use questions from established questionnaires, remarking on the efficiency of building upon the thinking and work of others. He explained "...the mores of social science in general and survey research in particular not only permit but encourage the repetition of questions" (p. 14).

Subjects were asked two types of questions (see Appendix A for a sample of the questionnaire): 1) questions relating to situations which the subject knew to require an assertive response and in which she was assertive; and 2) questions relating to situations which the subject knew to require an assertive response and in which she was unable to be assertive. Over a four-week period, subjects were required to complete questions relating to five assertive situations and five nonassertive situation

Despite the common use of the type of questions used in this instrument, the investigator pilot-tested the structured journal by actively answering the questions related to her own assertive and nonassertive situations. From that experience, the investigator was able to determine that four weeks was a reasonable period of time for the subjects to complete the journals, and that the questions were ones that could be answered in a reasonable length of time (approximately 15-30 minutes for each situation).

To encourage short, precise answers, limited space was made available for each question. However, subjects were told to use the back of each page if more space was necessary. Two blank pages were also available on the back of the journal for any additional comments the subjects might wish to make.

The journals were printed on 8½" x 14" paper, folded in half and stapled in the middle to create an 8½" x 7" booklet in which the instructions and journal pages were self-contained. The instructions included not only what was required of the subjects in completing the journal, but also established a tone of request, confidentiality, and appreciation for the subjects involved. In addition, a definition of assertiveness was included to provide the parameters from which subjects could identify and choose the situations about which they would write. And finally, a statement was included which promised confidentiality and anonymity of the subjects. Since confidentiality was a paramount criterion no primary data has been included here.

It should be pointed out that in order to avoid the issue of sex differences in assertiveness (which was beyond the scope of the present study), only female subjects were used.

### III. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

Since the instrument used in the present study, a questionnaire, is an "instrument of communication, a two-way conversation between the respondent and the survey researcher" (Labaw, 1980, p. 10), it was required that subjects have an ability to communicate in writing, answers to the questionnaire. Subjects were selected by the researcher who met the following criteria:

a) the subject should have demonstrated the ability to be articulate, introspective, and sincere in her ability to express a genuine awareness of assertive related interactions; b) the subject should be female and at least 25 years of age; and; c) the subject should be experiencing no current major emotional crisis.

#### IV. DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Following are the steps that were taken by the investigator in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires:

1. The investigator met with each participant to explain the nature of the research and to detail what each subject would be required to do.

2. The investigator verbally explained the instructions and gave a hypothetical example of both types of situations (one in which assertion was accomplished, and another in which it was not), answering the questions that related to each situation.

This exercise intended to accomplish two things: a) to make the instructions clearer, and b) to demonstrate the amount of depth and precision that would be required in answering the questions.

3. Subjects were then asked to read the written instructions which were provided as part of the journal. These instructions reiterated the verbal instructions and further established a tone of respect, confidentiality, and appreciation of the subjects involved.

4. Once the expectations were made clear and explicit, subjects were then asked if they felt capable and willing to participate in the research project. Each subject responded favor-



ably. The majority expressed an attitude of enthusiasm, adding that they expected some personal gain from the experience.

5. Subjects were asked to sign an informed consent form, and to initial an information sheet which provided an overview of the research project.

6. Subjects were thanked and encouraged to contact the investigator if they had any further questions relating to this project.

7. As the subjects were previously made aware, two weeks after the initial distribution of the journals, the investigator contacted each participant in order to gauge the amount of progress being made as well as to insure that no one was having major difficulty in completing the journals. It was at this point that it was decided to extend the research period from four weeks to six. Several subjects had experienced the winter flu and others found the impending Christmas holidays a distraction. All subjects, however, expressed optimism in completing the journals if the time period was extended by two weeks.

It is of interest to note that many subjects had by this time begun to discover a pattern to their own assertiveness. Some were finding it easy to come up with examples relating to situations in which they were able to act assertively, and difficulty in coming up with ones in which they were unable to act assertively, while others found the opposite to be true.

8. At the end of the six week period, the journals were collected. Since the investigator attempted to make personal contact with each subject, the collection process took another five

days, at which time 100% of the journals were returned.

9. Subjects were thanked once again for the amount of work that appeared to have gone into the journals and for sharing some of their personal experiences with the investigator. Subjects were told that the results of the research project would be made available to them once completed.

#### V. COLLATING THE DATA

What follows is an account of the procedures used to collate the responses recorded by each subject in the structured journals. To provide anonymity for the subjects involved as well as a context from which to read the journal summaries, each summary begins with a brief biographical note describing a fictitious person who resembles the subject involved. Subjects' names and occupations have been changed, as well as the names and occupations of those with whom she interacted.

Due to the nature of the open-ended type questions used in the journals, responses ranged from one word to one page answers, making the data in its raw form somewhat unwieldy. In order to permit economy of thought in understanding the data, factors have been extracted which reflect what appeared to be the underlying feature involved in the subject's assertion and nonassertion. This was accomplished by making an interpretation of the data from a humanistic perspective in general and Rath's Needs Theory in particular. For example, Mary's statement: "If I'm nice to him, perhaps he'll change; I'm very upset over the break-up of our family" has been rendered "fear of rejection" since it appears that the subject is saying: "If I'm nice to

him, maybe he'll change and we can get back together; if I'm not nice to him (by being assertive), he may never want to come back, he may leave me for good."

The operational definitions of the following terms will aid the reader's understanding of the journal summaries:

Benign nonassertion: Nonassertion that appears to be sanative (healing to physical or moral health) rather than hurtful. The criterion is that the individual does not appear to feel diminished in anyway as a result of the nonassertion.

Fear of rejection: The fear of a negative or antagonistic attitude toward oneself from another individual.

Significant other: A person in the immediate environment who is perceived by an individual to exert psychological influence on him/her.

Nonsignificant other: A person in the immediate environment who is perceived by an individual to exert insignificant psychological influence on him/her.

Strong belief: A conviction or cherished idea which is involved in shaping one's way of life; a principle that guides one's actions.

Following each journal summary are observations regarding individual subjects; for example, patterns that emerged from the journal entries. These patterns were seen to represent how underlying factors (e.g., fear of rejection), were manifested by each subject. Following the data from all 14 journals, observations made from the entire spectrum of subjects are presented.

In the above chapter, the rationale for the methodology

used in this investigation was presented, followed by the procedures used to design the questionnaire (structured journal), as well as the procedures used to select the subjects, and to distribute and collect the journals. Finally, how the data were collated was explained.

CHAPTER IV  
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS

It was the purpose of this investigation to explore the emotional variables that interfere with or enhance assertive behavior. In order to fulfill this purpose, fourteen women were selected according to designated criteria to complete a structured journal which was designed to distill the emotional factors involved in an assertive act. Using the theoretical framework of the humanistic perspective in general and Rath's Needs Theory in particular, these factors were identified as being related to emotional needs, which have been shown by Rath to be related to assertive behavior.

This chapter will present the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study.

I. FINDINGS

The structured journal provided a means by which the factors that appeared to inhibit or enhance individual assertiveness could be identified. The data showed that many emotional factors were involved in both assertive and nonassertive acts. These factors, when viewed in light of Rath's Needs Theory appear to be related to emotional needs. According to Rath, emotional factors which are found to be related to emotional needs have an important affect on an individual's ability to be assertive. It was not the purpose of this study to classify subjects according to particular emotional needs, but to use Rath's theory to identify and understand the emotional factors.

Partly through heredity, but largely through environmental factors, (parents and culture), individuals develop certain emotional needs which are felt (by the individual) to be inimical to his/her sense of well being (Raths, 1972). Fundamental to Raths' Needs Theory is the idea that a strong relationship exists between emotional needs and behavior. When emotional needs are being met, an individual feels secure and is "free to learn and to grow, more free to look inward, more free to look at alternatives, and more free to choose from them (p. 3). These individuals are able to behave proactively, are intrinsically motivated, and are able to behave assertively. When certain emotional needs are not being met, an individual feels insecure, doesn't have a sense of well being, is uncertain of him/herself, and the situations around him/her. These individuals are reactive, extrinsically motivated and are less able to behave assertively (Raths, 1972).

What follows in this section are the journal summaries of the 14 subjects who participated in this study. As was explained in the preceding chapter, factors which represent what appears to be the underlying inhibitor or enhancer of a subject's assertion or nonassertion, have been extracted from the statements made by the subject. At the end of each journal summary, interpretations of the data are made regarding the patterns of assertiveness for each individual. At the end of the 14 journal summaries, further interpretations are made from the entire spectrum of subjects.

Individual Journal SummariesSharon

Brief biographical note: Sharon is a busy professional woman in her late thirties who is committed to her children and her second marriage. She is regarded by those who know her to be warm and caring.

Following are the situations in which Sharon was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

Situation I

Sharon's desired assertion: To have a co-worker do an equal share of the work and to adapt to the philosophy of the workplace.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Sharon stated: "I'd like to confront her, but I don't know her well enough to know how she'll react."

-Interpretation: Underlying Sharon's fear of how the other person might react may be a fear of rejection. She may be afraid to confront her co-worker because he might get angry or say "No".

Situation II

Sharon's desired assertion: To ask her mother to stop nattering about the TV show.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Sharon stated: "She's been doing this for years, she'll never change. As a child I never felt it was possible to ask my parents to not do something.

-Interpretation: What appears to be a sense of helplessness at one level may be a fear of rejection at a deeper level. It may be that Sharon was afraid that her mother might have gotten angry, hurt, or may have even withdrawn her love.

Situation III

Sharon's desired assertion: To ask her father to speak to her mother with respect.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Sharon stated: "I feel guilty for not defending my mother but I couldn't figure out a way to say what I wanted without hurting my father."

-Interpretation: Underlying this idea may have been the notion that children who hurt their parents are bad; children who are bad are not worthy of love.

Following are the situations in which Sharon was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

#### Situation I

Sharon's desired assertion: To protect her child by clearing up a misunderstanding between her child and another child.

Factors:

##### Willing to risk rejection

-Sharon stated: "If the truth is negative, it would be easier to deal with than doubt."

-Interpretation: Sharon, like many mothers, may experience her child's rejection as her own. She may be willing to risk rejection in this case because the person with whom she is interacting is a child.

#### Situation II

Sharon's desired assertion: To see that a child fulfills an obligation.

Factors:

##### No risk of rejection

-Sharon stated: "I was able to keep in touch with my feelings here because I didn't feel personally threatened."

-Interpretation: The fear of rejection Sharon may have experienced in the "unable" situations was not provoked in this situation. Here again, this may be because the individual with whom she was interacting was a child.

#### Situation III

Sharon's desired assertion: To initiate an idea at work.

Factors:

##### No risk of rejection

-Sharon stated: "I know my co-worker wouldn't put me down or think negative things about me."

-Interpretation: Here Sharon appears to be dealing with a significant other whom she knows from past experience will not reject her.

#### Situation IV

Sharon's desired assertion: To have some time alone for shopping rather than to drive her child around.

Factors:

##### No risk of rejection

-Sharon stated: "I know that if I let go of feeling depressed or angered by the situation and feel assertive, I can often think of a solution that will meet everybody's need (including mine) to some extent."

-Interpretation: It appears that Sharon was able to insist on some time alone because she was certain her need could be met, and that she would not be rejected in this situation.



Situation V

Sharon's desired assertion: To have her spouse cook dinner.

## Factors:

No risk of rejection

-Sharon stated: "My relationship will improve if I have this need met, I know this from past experience."

-Interpretation: Sharon's experience with her spouse has shown her that he is unlikely to reject her when she asserts herself with him.

In each of the "unable" situations, Sharon's desired assertion appeared to be inhibited by a fear of rejection. In each of these situations, Sharon was interacting with significant others who she perceived as having the potential to be hurtful or negative to her in those particular situations. In the "able" situations, however, Sharon was interacting with individuals with whom she felt safe. It appears that when Sharon feels that the territory is safe, she can venture an assertive act; when the territory is unknown or has been shown to harbour danger, Sharon stays within the apparent safety of nonassertion. The majority of Sharon's "able" situations involved children. It appears that Sharon considers them to be "safe" people with whom she can be assertive.

## Mary

Brief biographical note: Mary, who is in her late thirties, is a single parent. Her devotion to her children is matched only by her passion to write. She is talented and respected, but must struggle financially in her career as a writer.

Following are the situations in which Mary was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

### Situation I

Mary's desired assertion: To ask her ex-husband to leave after a visit.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Mary stated: "I wanted to please him; I wanted things to work out; If I'm nice to him, perhaps he'll change--I'm very upset over the break-up of our family."

-Interpretation: What appears to underlie Mary's statement is: "If I'm nice to him, maybe he'll change and we can get back together; if I'm not nice to him (be being assertive), he may never want to come back. He may leave me for good."

### Situation II

Mary's desired assertion: To ask for a reduction in price on a used rug.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Mary stated: "I was afraid of offending the friend who referred me to her."

-Interpretation: Mary seems to be afraid that if she offends her friend, she may become angry or not like her anymore.

### Situation III

Mary's desired assertion: To have the others in the office stop smoking.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Mary stated: "If I insist, I will offend the others and that might jeopardize my job."

-Interpretation: Mary's fear of offending the others may relate to her fear that they will become angry or not like her. They may tell her boss, who probably (she fears) will not call her in for work anymore.

Situation IV

Mary's desired assertion: To have a play that she wrote titled properly.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Mary stated: "If I ask, they'll think I'm pretentious."

-Interpretation: Mary does not appear to see her need as a valid one. If she asks, she is certain she will be judged as being pretentious. Being pretentious is bad, according to Mary, and if she is bad, she probably won't be liked.

Situation V

Mary's desired assertion: To buy a particular Christmas tree.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Mary stated: "I had already claimed that tree and now you are buying it. That's not fair, but I'm too frustrated and weary to deal with you directly."

-Interpretation: The underlying fear here may be a fear that the others will become angry or hostile.

Following are the situations in which Mary was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Mary's assertion: To insist on going on a trip with her children in order to protect their welfare.

Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Mary stated: "We have gone through all of this before and I still feel very strongly that I should go along."

-Interpretation: It was not Mary's idea to go on the trip. she was agreeing to go in order to protect her children's welfare, and was, therefore, acting in accordance with their needs and not her own which would have been to stay home with them. By framing her need in terms of other's needs, Mary appears to feel protected against rejection. Mary would not perceive herself as being rejected if her assertion was denied.

Situation II

Mary's assertion: To express a strong non-racist belief.

Factors:

Strong belief/Protected against rejection

-Mary stated: "If people are allowed to be racist, the kind of thing that happened during World War II might happen again"

-Interpretation: Besides being something Mary feels very strongly about, Mary's assertion represents a racial group in general and Mary (a member of that group), only indirectly. By framing her need in terms of other's needs, Mary appears to be protected against rejection.

Situation III

Mary's assertion: To get a refund on a movie and to express a strong belief regarding violence in movies.

## Factors:

Strong belief/Protected against rejection

-Mary stated: "Movies like this should be censored as they may cultivate violence in others"

-Interpretation: Here again, Mary is asserting a strong belief. Her assertion does not relate to Mary directly, but is focused instead on humanity in general. Once again, Mary appears to protect herself from rejection by framing her need as other's needs.

Situation IV

Mary's assertion: To communicate special financial needs at work.

## Factors:

Strong Belief

-Mary stated: "I need to work on my writing no matter what, so I'm willing to take the risk of asking my boss."

-Interpretation: Mary's writing is one of the most important things in her life.

Protected against rejection

-Mary stated: "If I ask, he'll think I'm immoral for wanting to stay on Unemployment Insurance, so I'll tell him it is because I need to be home with my kids rather than the real reason which is that I want to work on my writing career."

-Interpretation: It appears that Mary believes that her children's need may appear to be more legitimate than her own need to write; because of this, she feels less likely to be told "No".

Situation V

Mary's assertion: To express a strong belief about creativity.

## Factors:

Strong belief

-Mary stated: "I was able to be assertive because of my desire to defend my cause and to educate others as to what creativity really is."

-Interpretation: Mary's creativity (her writing) is one of the most important things in her life and she wants people to understand what it is all about.

Protected against rejection

-Interpretation: Because Mary's assertion related to creative people in general and not Mary specifically, she is protected from any potential negative feedback.

Each of the situations in which Mary was unable to be assertive involved a desired assertion which related to an emotional need that was solely her own (e.g., "I need you to leave", "I need you not to smoke", "I need a reduction in price", etc.)

This is in contrast to the assertions expressed in the "able" situations in which Mary consistently framed her need as another's need (e.g., her children's welfare, a racial group, and creative people in general). What this suggests is that when Mary is able to frame her need in such a way that it is cloaked within the needs of others, she is protected against rejection and is thus able to be assertive. If her need cannot be so cloaked, Mary, like many who believe that it is not okay to ask for things for ourselves, has difficulty being assertive. In each of the "unable" situations, Mary does not expect her needs to be recognized as valid or legitimate, and does not, therefore, expect them to be met.

It is important to note that each of the "able" situations involved something of extreme importance to Mary. Situations I involved her children's welfare, and Situations II-V involved Mary's strong beliefs about her career, racism, violence, and creativity. It appears that when a strong belief is involved, Mary is moved to be assertive and that her strategy for dealing with the fear of rejection, like that provoked in the "unable" situations, is to frame her need as another's need.

## Ellen

Brief biographical note: Ellen is a professional business woman who is married, with no children. She is meticulous in every aspect of her life and is known by her friends to be highly intelligent, warm, and caring.

Following are the situations in which Ellen was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion.

### Situation I

Ellen's desired assertion: To make a comment at an informal meeting.

Factors:

#### Benign assertion

-Ellen stated: "What I would gain wasn't really worth the effort. It wasn't important enough to me."

-Interpretation: At first glance, Ellen's reason for her nonassertion (i.e., that it's not worth the effort), may be viewed as disguised fear of rejection. However, in this instance, Ellen described herself as being physically relaxed and feeling fine both before and after her nonassertion. It would appear that her nonassertion was benign in that it did not contribute to diminishing her in any way. It is possible, however, that with further clarification from Ellen, what is considered to be benign nonassertion may turn out to be fear of rejection that she is unable to own.

### Situation II

Ellen's desired assertion: To point out her job experience which was being over-looked in a performance review.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Ellen stated: "I wasn't prepared. It's easier to be assertive when prepared than when it's ad lib."

-Interpretation: Ellen appears to be saying: "If I'm prepared, I'm less likely to say something wrong. If I were to say something wrong, I might look foolish. If I look foolish, I may be rejected."

### Situation III

Ellen's desired assertion: To state her opinion at a social gathering.

Factors:

#### Benign nonassertion

-Ellen stated: "I was too busy playing hostess and was concentrating on my social role."

-Interpretation: Concentrating on playing hostess and con-

Situation III cont.

concentrating on being assertive appeared to be two mutually exclusive acts. Because Ellen described herself as being relaxed and satisfied by her choice to play hostess, her non-assertion did not appear to diminish her sense of well being. As in Situation I, however, with further clarification from Ellen, this benign nonassertion may be determined to be fear of rejection at its core.

Situation IV

Ellen's desired assertion: To express a controversial point of view to a relative who Ellen sees only rarely and with whom she has tentative ties.

## Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Ellen stated: "I don't want to rock the boat or bring any discomfort into a social situation (especially when the situation represents a rare contact with relatives (one's roots))."  
-Interpretation: Underlying Ellen's fear of disagreeing with her relatives may be a fear that if she disagrees, they may become upset with her, and perhaps choose not to love her.

Situation V

Ellen's desired assertion: To ask for more information from a co-worker.

## Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Ellen stated: "I knew there would be a difference of opinion, so I was putting off dealing with those differences. I hadn't been expecting the phone call, so I hadn't had a chance to decide ahead of time what I wanted to know."  
-Interpretation: Here again, Ellen's nonassertion appears to relate to being prepared. She may believe that if she has time to prepare herself, she'll be less likely to be rejected.

Following are the situations in which Ellen was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Ellen's assertion: To assert her idea at a meeting from a memo which she had prepared earlier.

## Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Ellen stated: "I was prepared in advance and brought the preparation (memo) with me. They'll respect my opinion. I look like I know what I'm doing; they'll think I'm tough."  
-Interpretation: Because Ellen is prepared, she appears to feel confident that she will be accepted by the others at the meeting.

Situation II

Ellen's assertion: To express her idea to an obnoxious co-worker.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Ellen stated: "Today he seems cordial so I'll take advantage of his friendliness and state my ideas."

-Interpretation: On other days, Ellen perceives her co-worker's behavior in a way that leaves her feeling unsafe. Today, however, he is perceived as behaving in an accepting way which leaves Ellen feeling as though he will not reject her.

Situation III

Ellen's assertion: To state a controversial opinion at a large meeting.

Factors:

Strong belief

-Ellen stated: "I experienced moral outrage. I had a strong sense of responsibility to state my opinion in support of the executive.

-Interpretation: This situation involves an idea Ellen is committed to.

Protected against rejection

-Ellen stated: "I was asked prior to the meeting to speak, so I had time to prepare what I'd say."

-Interpretation: Ellen appears to be able to state her opinion without fear of rejection since she has had the time to prepare what she would say. It is as though when she feels prepared, she feels more likely to be accepted by the others.

Situation IV

Ellen's assertion: To convince her boss to hire her friend.

Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Ellen stated: "I had lots of time to think about it beforehand and to consider what I wanted to do."

-Interpretation: Here again, Ellen appears to feel safe because she has had time to prepare what she wanted to say and do.

Situation V

Ellen's assertion: To express feelings of hurt over her mother's withholding a family heirloom.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Ellen stated: "I'm going to use a new approach, not the old one I've used in the past. I'll let her know I've heard what she needs and tell her what I need and suggest that perhaps there's a way to understand one another."

-Interpretation: Ellen has had the opportunity to prepare her strategy. It appears that her need to express her hurt feelings was stronger than her fear of rejection, so she was willing to risk being told no once again by her mother.



The most outstanding feature of Ellen's journal is the importance she places on being prepared. It appears that being prepared is Ellen's strategy for dealing with her fear of what others may think about her (e.g., If I'm unprepared, I may appear as though I don't know what I'm talking about; I might look foolish). By being prepared, Ellen appears to be able to master the fear of rejection that appears to be provoked when she is unprepared.

## Lynn

Brief biographical note: Lynn is a soft-spoken, highly intelligent woman who is married with no children. She is educated, yet under-employed and experiences much frustration because her talents are not being utilized.

Following are the situations in which Lynn was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

### Situation I

Lynn's desired assertion: To correct a casual acquaintance regarding the use of a nickname.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I think she is glamorous and better than I since she owns a company. So who am I to tell her what I want? She's more powerful. I always feel plain, unsophisticated, conscious of the way I'm dressed, and generally ill at ease in her presence."

-Interpretation: Lynn feels inferior to her acquaintance. She may be afraid to say anything to her because she might say something awful about her in return, and that would only make her feel worse.

### Situation II

Lynn's desired assertion: To insist that she cannot work overtime.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I was afraid I'd never get work again."

-Interpretation: Lynn appears to fear saying no because if she does, her boss will think she is a bad worker, and he will not call her in for work again.

### Situation III

Lynn's desired assertion: To ask for more hours at work.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I feel like I'm begging when I ask for hours."

-Interpretation: When Lynn has to ask for more hours at work, Lynn appears to feel inferior and to worry that they will say no.

### Situation IV

Lynn's desired assertion: To volunteer for a task at a workshop.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

Situation IV cont.

-Lynn stated: "I don't want to appear pushy. I was afraid I might not do it well. If she doesn't choose me, it just goes to show that she doesn't like me.

-Interpretation: In this situation, Lynn appears to be in a double bind. If she volunteers and does not do well, she risks rejection; if she does not volunteer and is not chosen by her instructor, she experiences rejection.

Following are the situations in which Lynn was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion.

Situation I

Lynn's assertion: To enforce a policy at work.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I had the knowledge and security that my position was correct and that I would be backed up by my supervisors."

-Interpretation: Here Lynn is interacting with an individual who exerts insignificant psychological influence. This, combined with the knowledge of her position and the sense of security she had from her supervisors appears to make it safe for her to be assertive.

Situation II

Lynn's assertion: To not trade hours with a co-worker.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "It was important to me to keep my day as I had planned it. I don't like her much, so saying no gave me a sense of power."

-Interpretation: In the "unable" situations, the other person had what Lynn needed; in this case, Lynn has what the other person needed. That Lynn disliked the other person appeared to further lessen any potential threat of rejection.

Situation III

Lynn's assertion: To resign from her job.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "When he called about my schedule, it felt great to be able to say I quit."

-Interpretation: Here again, Lynn has what the other person wants. She needs nothing from the other person, and is the one doing the rejecting.

Situation IV

Lynn's assertion: To return an object to a friend the next day.

Factors:

Situation IV cont.No fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I've kept this object as a favor and now I'm no longer responsible for it. She'll have to wait until it is convenient for me to return it."

-Interpretation: The friend involved is a close one with whom Lynn probably feels safe. Lynn needs nothing from the other person and is the one in the position to say "No".

Situation V

Lynn's assertion: To have her spouse do the chores he had promised to do.

## Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Lynn stated: "I feel safe being assertive with him. He's a good person to practice being assertive with."

-Interpretation: Lynn's experience with this person seems to have shown her that he is unlikely to reject her.

When interacting with those she does not know well, Lynn appears to feel unsafe and less likely to be assertive. When her self-confidence or self-esteem is low, Lynn appears less likely to be assertive; when she feels confident (e.g., when she has knowledge of and support in a situation), Lynn appears to be able to override any potential fear of rejection.

The critical variable for Lynn, however, is that it appears to be more difficult for her to be assertive when the other person has something she needs (e.g., a job, or hours at work); when Lynn needs nothing from the other person and is the one in the position to say "yes" or "no", she appears more likely to be assertive.

## Irene

Brief biographical note: Irene is a single mother in her mid-thirties. In between her job, her political activities, and her work toward her Master's degree, she manages to have fun. She is known by her many friends as being bright, gregarious, and genuine.

Following are the situations in which Irene was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion.

### Situation I

Irene's desired assertion: To ask her professor to explain a low mark.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I was too low emotionally and too stressed out. It was easier to take the low mark than to go through a scene with him. It may be that he doesn't like me, or that I did poorly on the final. I'm confused and shocked."

-Interpretation: It appears that Irene fears approaching her professor for fear that he would become antagonistic; she does not appear to feel emotionally or physically capable of dealing with his potential anger.

### Situation II

Irene's desired assertion: To resolve a disagreement with a friend.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "Speaking to her about it would be useless. She will never apologize or even acknowledge what happened."

-Interpretation: If Irene were to approach her friend, she might reject her feelings.

### Situation III

Irene's desired assertion: To tell her relatives that their dinner invitation was a misunderstanding.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I was afraid they would misunderstand and think I wanted to exclude them."

-Interpretation: If Irene tells them the truth, they might think she was trying to be hurtful, and that would make them feel badly. If they felt badly, they might reject Irene.

Situation IV

Irene's desired assertion: To eat in a restaurant of her choice.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I felt trapped and fed up with having to put up with their choices."

-Interpretation: It appears that Irene believes that if she were to ask them, she probably would not be listened to.

Situation V

Irene's desired assertion: To report her doctor for obscene behavior.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I was intimidated by him as a specialist. I felt some doubt about his intentions and I didn't want to open myself up to cross-examination."

-Interpretation: Irene believes that the doctor has more authority than she, so she is not permitted to confront him. If she were to confront him, she fears that he would challenge her. Because she feels confused, she appears to feel unable to defend herself.

Following are the situations in which Irene was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Irene's assertion: To set limits with a friend.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Irene stated: "If she is a true friend, she'll accept what I say."

-Interpretation: "If she is a true friend, she won't reject what I say. If she does reject me, she is not a true friend, and I would want to know that."

Situation II

Irene's assertion: To get a grade changed in a course.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I knew that this grade was wrong."

-Interpretation: Because Irene had evidence, she was certain of her position and knew she could not be challenged.

Situation III

Irene's assertion: To express feelings of hurt and resentment to friends.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Irene stated: "I knew that not talking would only make things worse. I had to say what I felt even though the idea

Situation III cont.

of confrontation made me very nervous."

-Interpretation: It appears that Irene's need to express her feelings was greater than her fear of rejection.

Situation IV

Irene's assertion: To refuse to do volunteer work.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Irene stated: "I knew the only way to get rid of them was to be honest."

-Interpretation: Here Irene was doing the rejecting (saying "no").

Situation V

Irene's assertion: To report an incident to the authorities.

Factors:

Strong belief

-Irene stated: "I have a responsibility to let the people who run that factory know that they can't just dump poison into my environment."

-Interpretation: Because this is something Irene feels strongly about, she appears compelled to act on it.

In each of the "unable" situations, Irene appears to be afraid to approach the other individual for fear that she would be hurt or ignored. It was as though she did not perceive herself as having any power (influence) in these situations (e.g., I'm probably wrong, she'll never listen, they'll misunderstand me, etc.). This is in contrast to the "able" situations in which Irene appeared to perceive herself as having some influence. Her certainty of her understanding of the situation appeared to add to her sense of influence.

## Janet

Brief biographical note: Janet is a single, professional woman in her early 30's. She is highly organized and disciplined in her life, yet she enjoys playing and having a good time. She is appreciated by her friends for her genuineness and for knowing how to listen.

Following are the situations in which Janet was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

### Situation I

Janet's desired assertion: To tell a friend not to invalidate her opinion.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "I feared looking foolish. I didn't know what his reactions would be (I don't know him well), and I feared being told I was wrong."

-Interpretation: "If I appear to be wrong, or to look foolish, he may not like me."

### Situation II

Janet's desired assertion: To communicate a sexual need to her lover.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "He may not want to do what I want; he may only do it because he feels obligated."

-Interpretation: Janet appears to be in a double bind situation here. If she asks her lover to meet her sexual need, and he does, she may feel rejected because she perceives his response as an obligation; if she does not ask him to meet her sexual need, she feels rejected because her need goes unmet.

### Situation III

Janet's desired assertion: To do a job she knew she could be better and quicker than her friend.

Factors:

#### Fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "I was afraid I'd appear undemocratic. I was afraid I might hurt her feelings."

-Interpretation: "If I appear undemocratic, or if I hurt her feelings, she may think negatively about me."



Situation IV

Janet's desired assertion: To tell her parents no to their request to stay with her on their visit.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "I was taken by surprise, I didn't have time to think about what I wanted. I felt obligated. They've always been generous to me."

-Interpretation: "If I don't repay them for the sacrifices they have made for me, they might think I was unappreciative."

Situation V

Janet's desired assertion: To be thanked for doing a favor.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "I was worried he'd think it was silly of me to need to conform to the traditional social graces."

-Interpretation: "If I need to be thanked, he will think I'm less generous; he will think poorly of me."

Following are the situations in which Janet was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Janet's assertion: To have her mechanic re-do some auto repairs.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "I've been dealt with by him fairly in the past."

-Interpretation: Janet is confident that her mechanic will treat her fairly and is certain of her right to ask him to re-do the auto repairs.

Situation II

Janet's assertion: To refuse to share her expensive liquor.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "He just wants alcohol and isn't particular what kind. My expensive stuff is being wasted on him; he is not appreciating it. This liquor, because it is expensive, is mine to share or not. I knew he would not hold a grudge."

-Interpretation: Janet's certainty of her understanding of the situation and her faith that her friend would not reject her appeared to enhance her ability to be assertive.

Situation III

Janet's assertion: To make a suggestion to a friend.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Janet stated: "The risk of resistance was low."

Situation III cont.

-Interpretation: The friend involved in this situation appears to be one Janet was certain would not reject her.

Situation IV

Janet's assertion: To clarify her relationship with her lover.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Janet stated: "Being a newish relationship, I was only 'up to my knees' and hadn't invested so much that I'd lose a lot if the relationship dissolved."

-Interpretation: Confronted with a difficult situation, Janet appears to be able to be assertive by focusing on an aspect of the situation which diminishes the emotional danger.

Situation V

Janet's assertion: To express feelings of jealousy, vulnerability, and resentment to her lover.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Janet stated: "I was convinced that if we can't be open then the relationship was not worth pursuing."

-Interpretation: Here again, Janet uses the strategy found in Situation IV which is to focus on aspects of the situation that reduce her fear.

Janet's past experience with certain individuals who have shown a potential to reject her, and her uncertainty of how other individuals might react, appears to provoke a fear that these individuals will react negatively. At times, however, when Janet is uncertain of how others will react, she uses a strategy of focusing on an aspect of the situation which appears to diminish any potential emotional danger. This strategy appears to enhance her ability to be assertive.

Margaret

Brief biographical note: Margaret is a single woman in her early thirties, who seems to thrive on the demands of running her own business. She is always on the go, keeping her eyes open for innovative ideas.

Following are the situations in which Margaret was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

Situation I

Margaret's desired assertion: To ask whether her visit was an intrusion.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Margaret stated: "I didn't want to be confronted with a possible request to leave, because I would take it as a personal rejection."

-Interpretation: Fear of rejection is stated clearly by the subject.

Situation II

Margaret's desired assertion: To tell a friend she needed time to think over her request to visit.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Margaret stated: "She really needed support, having gone through two years of misery."

-Interpretation: "If I'm unsupportive, she may think I'm not a good friend, and she may get angry with me."

Situation III

Margaret's desired assertion: To refuse to do a favour for a friend.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Margaret stated: "She needed someone she could count on. I didn't want to seem selfish."

-Interpretation: People who refuse to do favours for friends are selfish and not very good friends. She might get angry with me if I refuse to do the favour.

Situation IV

Margaret's desired assertion: To tell a friend of her concern over how she handled a particular situation.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Margaret stated: "I thought it would seem presumptuous and

Situation IV cont.

blaming to say anything."

-Interpretation: "If I say anything, she'll get hurt or angry with me."

Situation V

Margaret's desired assertion: To tell her lover she wanted him to go home for the night.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Margaret stated: "It would have been a wrangle. I would have had to argue about it."

-Interpretation: "If I tell him to go home, he'll get angry."

Following are the situations in which Margaret was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Margaret's assertion: To ask a friend not to read her mail.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Margaret stated: "I knew it was a clear violation of my space and prerogative."

-Interpretation: "When one is clearly violating my rights, I am moved to be assertive."

Situation II

Margaret's assertion: To refuse to do a favor.

Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Margaret stated: "I was able to refuse because I had a friend act as the go-between so I didn't have to tell them directly."

-Interpretation: "Because I was not refusing to do the favor directly, I was protected from rejection."

Situation III

Margaret's assertion: To refuse to do a favor.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Margaret stated: "I knew I didn't want to deal with them, I knew what I wanted to accomplish."

-Interpretation: Margaret's need to not deal with doing the favor appeared to be greater than her fear of rejection.

Situation IV

Margaret's assertion: To get back some money that was due to her.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Margaret stated: "I knew I was entitled to the money."

-Interpretation: "When one is clearly violating my rights, I am moved to be assertive."

Margaret's fear of rejection in the "unable" situations appears to centre around a need to avoid anger. In the "able" situations, Margaret appears to refuse to do favors and to make demands because there was either a clear violation of her rights involved, or she had another need that was greater than her need to avoid anger.

Barb

Brief biographical note: Barb, who is in her late thirties, is a married, working mother, and a student. She is struggling to find an alternative to the traditionally female occupations she has worked at for the last twenty years.

Following are the situations in which Barb was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion.

Situation I

Barb's desired assertion: To refuse to listen to a relative's long, boring, and repetitive story.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "I didn't want to hurt her, or make a scene, mainly because it would open too many doors."

-Interpretation: "If I refuse to listen to your boring story, you may think I'm rejecting you, and then you might reject me."

Situation II

Barb's desired assertion: To refuse to share something personal with a relative.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "Because I've told her lots of times before and she doesn't listen, it's as though she doesn't take any notice to what I'm saying."

-Interpretation: "It hurts and frustrates me when she ignores what I'm saying."

Situation III

Barb's desired assertion: To communicate to a relative that she does not want to hear her life's story everytime she sees her.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "If I say anything, I will hurt her feelings, and it will only invite further emotional outpourings."

-Interpretation: "If I refuse to listen to your life story you may think I'm rejecting you and then you might reject me."

Situation IV

Barb's desired assertion: To set limits for her child.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "I felt impotent, exhausted, and desperate."

Situation IV. cont.

-Interpretation: "If I try to set limits you'll become antagonistic and I don't have the emotional energy to deal with that right now."

Situation V

Barb's desired assertion: To confront a co-worker about what Barb perceived to be rude behavior.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "I was confused, there didn't seem to be any reason for her rudeness."

-Interpretation: "If I confront you, I might find out you have a real reason to be angry with me."

Following are the situations in which Barb was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Barb's assertion: To refuse to wait on an obnoxious customer.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Barb stated: "I recognized his behavior. I didn't need his approval, I don't care what he thinks of me."

-Interpretation: "You appear to have insignificant psychological influence on me and so I do not perceive you as a threat in terms of rejection."

Situation II

Barb's assertion: To state her opinion in a class.

Factors:

No fear of rejection/ Strong belief

-Barb stated: "I'm very concerned about upholding the dignity of all women."

-Interpretation: "The students in this class do not threaten me. This is something I really believe in and so I'm moved to be assertive."

Situation III

Barb's assertion: To set limits for her child.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Barb stated: "I was feeling particularly strong and calm."

-Interpretation: "When I feel calm and strong, I'm less concerned with how you will respond to my limit setting. I feel as though I can deal with this situation. I perceive myself as having some influence here."

Situation IV

Barb's assertion: To defend her child's behavior when he was ac-

Situation IV cont.

cused of wrong-doing by another individual.

## Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Barb stated: "It's my responsibility to make sure that my kid is treated fairly."

-Interpretation: "By defending my child, I'm being a good parent." The benefits of protecting her child appear to make it worth the risk of being rejected by the other person.

Barb's strategy in the "unable" situations appears to be to avoid confrontation because confrontation is perceived to cause the other to feel rejected by her which might generate rejection of Barb by the other. In these situations, she denied the expression of her needs in order to avoid the perceived potential discomfort of this rejective cycle.

It appears that when Barb feels calm and relaxed, she was able to perceive herself as having power (influence) in a situation. (Of course, it might also be true that when Barb felt as though she has power, she feels more relaxed and calm). Barb's assertiveness also appears to be enhanced when a strong belief is involved. In these situations, she seemed to focus on the ultimate correctness of her perceptions and used that to propel her into assertiveness.



## Diane

Brief biographical note: Diane, in her late thirties, is married and the mother of two teenagers. In addition to her family, she works as a counselor in a shelter for runaway teens.

Following are the situations in which Diane was unable to be assertive, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

### Situation I

Diane's desired assertion: To insist that a child leave his emotionally upset mother alone for awhile.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "I'm powerless here. I tell him to leave his mother alone and he ignores me. His mother wasn't asserting herself with him either."

-Interpretation: Since Diane did tell the child to leave his mother alone, this situation appears to be not a case of non-assertion, but rather a case of not getting the results she wanted. When one reads into her statement, however, in terms of the child's mother, there appeared to be things that Diane would have liked to have said but felt unable to do so. She may have thought that the mother was already distraught and if she were to criticize her (even in a supportive way), she may get upset or angry with Diane.

### Situation II

Diane's desired assertion: To insist that a friend who had borrowed a car from Diane's husband maintain the car better than she was doing.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "I wanted to stay out of the line of fire. I wanted to control how many things I had to fight about in my life and not take on someone else's stuff."

-Interpretation: "The only way I could approach this situation is in a combative way. Combative situations usually don't feel very good because people might get angry with me."

### Situation III

Diane's desired assertion: To ask for some time to work on her writing.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "I didn't feel confident risking a fight if it would make the holidays unpleasant."

-Interpretation: If I ask, he might get angry at me, and that would ruin the holidays.

Following are the situations in which Diane was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

#### Situation I

Diane's assertion: To insist that her daughter talk to her in a non-blaming manner.

Factors:

##### No fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "In the past I felt guilty, now I know I'm not responsible for her short-comings. I have learned that it's a big mistake to feel powerless with children so that you're trapped by them."

-Interpretation: Diane appeared to feel justified now, whereas in the past she felt guilty (as though she would be judged as a bad mother). Because she felt correct, she felt secure. Even though she was being judged harshly by her daughter, others would not judge her harshly.

#### Situation II

Diane's assertion: To insist that a client be direct rather than to gossip.

Factors:

##### No fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "It was my job to tell her because she was my client and I worked with her the most closely."

-Interpretation: Diane is officially sanctioned, and as an official, she appears to feel capable of being assertive.

#### Situation III

Diane's assertion: To defend herself against a complaint made by a co-worker.

Factors:

##### No fear of rejection

-Diane stated: "I knew his complaint wasn't fair. I was confident of my own position."

-Interpretation: As in Situation I, Diane's sense of rightness appears to enhance her assertion.

When Diane perceives getting her needs met as involving combat, she appears to be unlikely to be assertive; combat is seen to generate potential angry responses from others. In the "able" situations, however, Diane perceives herself as having the power (either the authority from her role, or out of her sense of correctness) to be assertive.

Beth

Brief biographical note: Beth, a married woman in her late 20's, is a dancer by profession. For the last two years, however, since she returned to university to finish her degree in philosophy, she has been working part-time in a retail store.

Following are the situations in which Beth was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

Situation I

Beth's desired assertion: To refuse to wait on a customer after closing hours.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Beth stated: "I put myself in a lessor situation from the start. His clean look of a professional, his attitude, and the fact that he was a man intimidated me."

-Interpretation: "If I refuse to wait on him, he'll become angry."

Situation II

Beth's desired assertion: To exert full strength while playing soccer.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Beth stated: "I was afraid I'd hurt someone. I always have to make sure the other person is alright."

-Interpretation: "If I hurt someone, they might become angry with me."

Situation III

Beth's desired assertion: To make a request of a group of people.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Beth stated: "I felt as though I was on trial and being judged by the others and that made me feel really uncomfortable."

-Interpretation. "They might say "no" or think badly of me."

Situation IV

Beth's desired assertion: To make a request of a co-worker.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Beth stated: "I was afraid of his reaction, especially since I recently saw him blow up in a similar instance."

-Interpretation: "If I say anything, he might become angry."

Following are the situations in which Beth was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

#### Situation I

Beth's assertion: To participate in an intimidating class.

Factors:

##### Willing to risk rejection

-Beth stated: "I have an understanding of the learning process and a certain faith in my own capabilities."

-Interpretation: "I know I'm doing my best and that if I do something wrong, it is only because I'm in the process of learning. My possible failure does not mean I'm rejectable."

#### Situation II

Beth's assertion: To give a presentation in class.

Factors:

##### No fear of rejection

-Beth stated: "I've done this before and I was thoroughly prepared. I knew my subject matter well enough to be ready for anything."

-Interpretation: "This is something I do well. Being prepared adds to my confidence because I'm less likely to make a rejectable mistake."

#### Situation III

Beth's assertion: To express anger and resentment to a police officer.

Factors:

##### No fear of rejection/Strong belief

-Beth stated: "I had the strong belief that I was being cheated. I was outraged that it took three policemen to issue me one ticket; what a waste of the city's resources."

-Interpretation: "These policemen do not threaten me. When I am morally outraged, I'm moved to be assertive."

In the "unable" situations, Beth's low self-confidence appears to provoke a fear of anger. In the "able" situations, Beth appears confident and seems to have developed three strategies for dealing with the fear that appears to inhibit her assertion in the "unable" situations: 1) Beth acted on the assumption that mistakes are not necessarily rejectable; 2) being prepared, thus less likely to make a rejectable mistake, and; 3) to diffuse or to not care about other's opinion of her.

## Donna

Brief biographical note: Donna, a single woman in her early thirties, is physically and politically active. She is a recent university graduate who is now looking for employment, which is an experience she has found to be both rewarding and frustrating.

Following are the situations in which Donna was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

### Situation I

Donna's desired assertion: To return a borrowed object and to explain why it took so long to do it.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Donna stated: "I'm afraid he'll deny my anger either by blaming me for having unrealistic ideals or by calling me judgmental."

-Interpretation: "If he denies my feelings or blames me, it will feel like he doesn't like me. I'm afraid he'll become angry with me."

### Situation II

Donna's desired assertion: To share something personal with a relative.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Donna stated: "I'm unsure of my motivation. I realize that I'm different for wanting to share this and doubting why I want to."

-Interpretation: "This feels like a big risk for me. Other people don't share things like this with their parents. I feel unsure of myself and uncertain about my motives. Besides, he may become angry with me."

### Situation III

Donna's desired assertion: To ask someone to dance.

#### Factors:

##### Fear of rejection

-Donna stated: "I've never actually asked an acquaintance to dance before, and I have no experience asking people to dance and being accepted or rejected."

-Interpretation: "Because I'm inexperienced, I have no evidence that I will not be rejected."

### Situation IV

Donna's desired assertion: To make a request of a co-worker.

#### Factors:

Situation IV cont.Fear of rejection

-Donna stated: "If I ask her she'll probably say 'no' and then I'll feel like a jerk."

-Interpretation: "What bothers me about being told 'no' is that I'll feel stupid. People who are stupid are rejectable."

Situation V

Donna's desired assertion: To tell her friend she was angry.

## Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Donna stated: "I didn't think it would help or that I'd be listened to and then I'd be even more frustrated because I'd expressed myself and nothing would have changed."

-Interpretation: Not being listened to feels like rejection. If I tried and did not succeed, my efforts would have failed. People who fail are rejectable."

Following are the situations in which Donna was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Donna's assertion: To share something personal with a friend.

## Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Donna stated: "My ability to be assertive was based mainly on my decision that she doesn't have power over me."

-Interpretation: "I'm willing to risk being rejected by you because I don't rely on you for anything important."

Situation II

Donna's assertion: To insist that she and a child she was with be treated with respect on the bus.

## Factors:

No fear of rejection/Strong belief

-Donna stated: "It was my desire and responsibility to protect the child I was with. He didn't have the right to be so rude."

-Interpretation: "Because I'm acting on a child's behalf, I'm less likely to be rejected. My moral responsibility for this child's protection moves me to be assertive."

Situation III

Donna's assertion: To insist on a certain quality of friendship from her friend.

## Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Donna stated: "I rehearsed the worst scenario, including his saying 'screw the friendship', so it was easy to do when I had to do it. Besides, other people think he's a jerk."

Situation III cont.

-Interpretation: "Not only have I prepared myself for the worst, I have the support of others."

Situation IV

Donna's assertion: To tell her friend how she was feeling.

Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Donna stated: "I'd prepared for about two weeks what I would say, so by the time I talked to him, I was able to be more present and less reactive."

Situation V

Donna's assertion: To tell her friend she didn't want to see her for awhile.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

-Donna stated: "I'd begun to see that I didn't have to have friends that made me feel bad about myself. I'd begun to trust my feelings."

-Interpretation: This may be a willingness to lose her friend, or it may even be a way of avoiding rejection by rejecting first.

In each of the "unable" situations, Donna appears to expect failure. The strategy she seems to use in dealing with her fear of rejection may be a type of disappointment insurance. In the "able" situations, Donna appears to use a strategy of rehearsing her expectations to fail. By imagining to bring about the calamity she expected to experience, she was able to prepare herself for the worst and thus willing to risk possible rejection.

Rosa

Brief biographical note: Rosa, who is in her early thirties, is a married, working mother. Cultural activities take up a great deal of her already busy life. Rosa has a particular passion for art and dance.

Following are the situations in which Rosa was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

Situation I

Rosa's desired assertion: To insist that a co-worker do his share of the work.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Rosa stated: "There were other people present and I didn't want them to hear us having an argument."

-Interpretation: At one level, Rosa appeared to be concerned about others thinking poorly of her if she argued in public. At another level, however, Rosa may not want to risk her co-worker becoming angry with her.

Situation II

Rosa's desired assertion: To not do the dishes when it was another adult's turn.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Rosa stated: "I don't want to destroy our very good relationship by telling her I am annoyed by her lack of participation in the kitchen."

-Interpretation: "If I tell her I'm annoyed, she'll become angry with me and that will destroy our relationship."

Situation III

Rosa's desired assertion: To tell her daughter's teacher that she thought his behavior was unreasonable.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Rosa stated: "I was afraid he might vent his feelings on my child."

-Interpretation: "He might take out his resentment and anger with me on my child."

Situation IV

Rosa's desired assertion: To refuse to help move a heavy table.

Factors:

Fear of rejection



Situation IV cont.

- Rosa stated: "I was afraid I would appear ungracious."
- Interpretation: "If I don't help, they'll think poorly of me and may even become angry with me."

Situation V

Rosa's desired assertion: To have stated her opinion at a meeting.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

- Rosa stated: "I'm afraid of making a fool of myself and I fear that other's opinion of me will be diminished."
- Interpretation: "If I state my opinion the others will think I'm foolish."

Following are the situations in which Rosa was able to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Rosa's assertion: To return faulty merchandise to a store.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

- Rosa stated: "I knew it was the store's responsibility."
- Interpretation: "Because I know I'm entitled to return the merchandise and because I don't care what they think of me, I'm free to be assertive."

Situation II

Rosa's assertion: To have her spouse be supportive in the preparation for Christmas.

Factors:

No fear of rejection/Strong belief

- Rosa stated: "I'm able to present myself concisely, clearly, and with great logic when it's really important to me and if I feel justified. I felt powerful and strong."
- Interpretation: "When it's really important to me, I feel confident enough to be assertive."

Situation III

Rosa's assertion: To ask a relative to visit her at home rather than at her relative's house.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

- Rosa stated: "I felt completely justified. I knew there would probably be some tension and that she would not come to visit me for some months."
- Interpretation: "I have the right to ask her to come to my house even if it means she'll refuse to come for awhile. I'll be able to handle her rejection."

Situation IV

Rosa's assertion: To give advice to a friend.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Rosa stated: "The family needed some encouragement and direction and I was able to give them that. I felt calm and sure of myself."

-Interpretation: "When I'm confident and calm, and sure of myself, I'm able to be assertive because I'm certain they won't reject me."

Situation V

Rosa's assertion: To correct an error made by a co-worker.

Factors:

Protected against rejection

-Rosa stated: "I was able to assert myself because I could write my assertion and wouldn't have to see her for five days."

-Interpretation: "I'm safe from negative feedback because I don't have to see her for a few days."

Two major themes ran through the "unable" situations:

1) a fear that others might become angry with Rosa, and; 2) a concern about what others might think about her. These concerns were not present in the "able" situations. Rosa's assertion appeared to be enhanced when she felt calm, strong, confident, and justified.

Cheryl

Brief biographical note: Cheryl, a single woman in her late twenties, is a professional photographer who expresses herself best through her work. Cheryl's manner of relating to others is as gentle as it is incisive.

Following are the situations in which Cheryl was unable to act assertively along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion:

Situation I

Cheryl's desired assertion: To let a colleague know his interuption made her angry.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I was feeling nervous about being in a new place. I was a new person, both in this group of people, and in this studio. It was unfamiliar territory."

-Interpretation: "When I'm feeling nervous, it's hard to be assertive. Because I don't know him, I have no evidence that he won't become angry with me."

Situation II

Cheryl's desired assertion: To tell others she was feeling cut-out of the conversation.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "By the time I was moved to do something about it, I was feeling bad about myself."

-Interpretation: "I am already feeling too vulnerable; I can't risk feeling any worse."

Situation III

Cheryl's desired assertion: To drop a university course.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I felt bad, guilty, and inferior. I felt down on myself for not having the stamina to pull through."

-Interpretation: "I already feel vulnerable. Dropping the course will only make me feel worse because I'll be a quitter."

Situation IV

Cheryl's desired assertion: To leave a party when she felt like it.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I was feeling more and more uncomfortable, but I was afraid that I would seem unfriendly."

Situation IV cont.

-Interpretation: "If they think I'm unfriendly or that I was not having a good time, they might become angry with me."

Following are the situations in which Cheryl was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Cheryl's assertion: To not put her library books on the shelf outside the bookstore.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I had anticipated the situation, so I made a decision before it happened."

-Interpretation: "I had time to decide what I wanted to do. I did not care what he thought about me."

Situation II

Cheryl's assertion: To confront members of a university department regarding a problem with a class.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I knew what I wanted, and I had a strategy for how to get it."

-Interpretation: "Because the members of the department are anonymous to me, they don't threaten me. I had the time to prepare a strategy."

Situation III

Cheryl's assertion: To express a difference of opinion in class.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I took the time to sort out my ideas and formulate my thoughts."

-Interpretation: "Because I took the time to organize and prepare my thoughts, I'm confident they'll be received positively."

Situation IV

Cheryl's assertion: To clarify a message from a friend.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

-Cheryl stated: "I removed myself from the situation for as long as it took me to think it through."

-Interpretation: "Because I was able to remove myself, I could organize and prepare my thoughts so they weren't muddled with other feelings and thoughts. When I'm able to be clear and prepared, I less likely to fear rejection."

In each of the "unable" situations, Cheryl's desired assertion was preceded by emotional discomfort; she was either feeling nervous, vulnerable, guilty, inferior, or emotionally upset. These emotional states are in contrast to the "able" situations in which Cheryl expressed feeling emotionally detached or confident.

The situations were also contrasted in that the "unable" situations involved what appeared to be spur of the moment decisions, whereas the "able" situations were ones in which Cheryl was able to take the opportunity to prepare her assertion.

Two of the "able" situations appeared to be enhanced by the insignificant psychological influence which was perceived by Cheryl to be exerted by the other.

Judy

Brief biographical note: Judy is a professional woman in her late thirties. She is married and is the mother of two grade-school children. Between her work, family, and political activities, Judy finds time to do the travelling she so much enjoys.

Following are the situations in which Judy was unable to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as inhibiting her assertion.

Situation I

Judy's desired assertion: To make a complaint to a city official.

Factors:

Benign nonassertion

-Judy stated: "I was hoping to get past the secretary, but it felt like too much trouble to spend more time on the phone."

-Interpretation: Judy weighed the amount of energy she had to devote to this matter against what she had to gain and decided to go no further. This nonassertion did not appear to leave her feeling diminished in any way.

Situation II

Judy's desired assertion: To refuse to be re-examined by her doctor.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Judy stated: "I felt afraid and powerless in the grips of this big medical machine."

-Interpretation: "If I go against what he wants me to do, he might become angry. He has the power to hurt me."

Situation III

Judy's desired assertion: To ask a visitor to leave her home.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

-Judy stated: "I was afraid of forcing my other friend into a choice between him and me."

-Interpretation: "If she chooses me, she might resent me or become angry with me for forcing her to reject him; or she might choose him and reject me."

Situation IV

Judy's desired assertion: To tell her mechanic that she was angry he had not told her about additional repair costs.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

Situation IV cont.

- Judy stated: "I felt confused and didn't want to go out on a limb or disturb the peace."
- Interpretation: "I'm confused and I might find out I was wrong and then I would appear foolish. If I'm right, he might become angry with me."

Situation V

Judy's desired assertion: To tell another professional how she felt about him at a workshop he was leading.

Factors:

Fear of rejection

- Judy stated: "My anger terrifies me; makes me think I'll make a fool of myself."
- Interpretation: "I'm so angry, I'm afraid I'll lose control and say something that will make him angry in return."

Following are the situations in which Judy was able to act assertively, along with the factors which have been identified as enhancing her assertion:

Situation I

Judy's assertion: To correct a co-worker regarding blaming her for an incident at work.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

- Judy stated: "It was clear-cut. I was clear that it was wrong for me to be dumped on earlier this morning."
- Interpretation: "I am certain I am right in this situation and that makes me confident he can't make me feel badly. I have also had some time to become clear on this."

Situation II

Judy's assertion: To spend time with a male friend who threatens her spouse.

Factors:

Willing to risk rejection

- Judy stated: "This friendship is important to me. I'm willing to listen to my husband's feelings but not willing to forego this relationship. I also know that I'm not doing anything unacceptable in seeing this person, and, thus, am not undermining my husband's and my relationship."
- Interpretation: "Because I know I'm not doing anything wrong, and because I know from past experience that my spouse is not likely to reject me, I'm willing to take this risk."

Situation III

Judy's assertion: To refuse to do extra volunteer work.

Factors:

No fear of rejection

- Judy stated: "I knew that if I volunteered for this com-

Situation III cont.

mittee, I would end up disappointing the group with my passive non-involvement."

-Interpretation: "Because I know my limits and because I'm certain they will understand, I'm able to be assertive."

In three out of the four "unable" situations in which fear of rejection was involved, Judy was interacting with others she perceived to have expertise in areas which she did not (e.g., her doctor, mechanic, and workshop leader). In the "able" situations, the others were perceived to have equal authority (e.g., a co-worker, friend, other volunteers, and her spouse).

The "able" situations were ones which Judy reported having taken time to prepare her assertion. Before she approached her co-worker, she spent some time clarifying the details of the situation; her thoughts and feelings were well defined regarding her visit with her male friend; and had previously assessed the amount of time she had to devote to volunteer work. In the "unable" situations, her assertion required spur-of-the-moment action. Judy had not yet had the opportunity to formulate her thoughts and feelings.



### Between Journal Summary

As can be seen from the interpretations of the journal summaries, emotional factors played a consistent and functional role in assertion and nonassertion. Specifically, the factor which appeared to be most consistently related to nonassertion was fear of rejection. Fear of rejection appeared to be manifested in a unique nonassertive pattern for each individual. One or more of the following general factors appeared to be involved in individual's nonassertion:

1. Being unclear of oneself and one's understanding of the situation, and low self-confidence or self-esteem was manifested when a desired assertion was preceded by: a) cognitive or emotional confusion or incongruity; b) by emotional discomfort (e.g., nervousness, guilt, or feelings of inferiority) ; c) an uncertainty about how the other might react, or; d) when past experience has shown the other's potential to be rejecting.

2. Being unprepared: Unpreparedness tended to be associated with: a) spur-of-the-moment interactions in which events were perceived as happening too quickly, and individuals were required to act without having had enough time to organize one's thoughts and emotions, and; b) a state of distraction (e.g., an individual attempting to do two or more things at a time).

3. A sense of powerlessness: When individuals: a) did not perceive themselves as having any say, influence, or right to act assertively in a situation, or; b) needed something from another and did not perceive themselves having a way to get it.

4. Conflict avoidance: Conflict avoidance was most often

in the form of avoidance of anger which was seen to generate pain and which was avoided particularly when one felt emotionally unable to deal with it.

5. Projection: "Attributing [transferring] one's own traits or attitudes to others"; "a prediction beyond the given data" (Chaplin, 1975, p. 411). Individuals were seen to project internal perceptions when they experienced: a) others as having greater authority (i.e., others were seen as smarter or better than oneself), merely because of their role (e.g., doctor, mechanic, or male); b) expectations of failure onto the situation (e.g., the only way this can work out is to fail), and; c) significant psychological influence as being exerted by others onto oneself when there was no substantiating evidence for this influence (e.g., when total strangers were seen to be intimidating for no particular reason, or when one feared, based only on one's perception, that others would think negatively of them).

The factors found to be related to an ability to be assertive were in situations where there was no fear of rejection, a willingness to risk rejection, or where one had a strategy to protect oneself against rejection. These factors were uniquely expressed by subjects in such ways as:

1. Being prepared: When individuals were able to take the time to assess a situation and their needs, and time to prepare their response, they appeared to feel less likely to make a rejectable mistake, and were thus, more able to be assertive.

2. Being clear about oneself and/or the situation: When one's desired assertion was preceded by a sense of ultimate cor-

rectness and clarity of one's feelings and one's understanding of the situation, or; when one's past experience has shown others to be non-rejecting.

3. Perceiving oneself as having power: Individuals appeared to be able to perceive themselves as having some influence in a situation when: a) they experienced a sense of calmness, psychological strength, or moral justification; b) one's role provided them with authority (e.g., being older, or having seniority), or; c) one needed nothing from the other or was the one in the position of doing the rejecting.

4. Projection: When one perceived the other as exerting insignificant psychological influence; when one was able to diffuse her concern about other's opinion of her by focusing on a more positive aspect of the interaction.

Another factor in enhancing assertiveness was seen in the subject's ability to express a strongly held belief. Further exploration of this factor might shed light on whether it is having a strongly held belief that enhances assertion, or whether it is merely easier to express a belief than to express a need.

As can be seen from Tables 4 and 5, the emotional factors reported by the subjects relate closely to the factors Rath associated with unmet or met emotional needs. Emotions which were associated with the presence of unmet emotional needs were found to be a contraindication of assertive behavior, whereas emotions associated with met emotional needs were found to enhance assertiveness.

Table 4

Comparison of subjects' expressed fear of rejection with Raths' indicators of unmet emotional needs

Expression of fear of rejection by subjects	Raths' indicators of individuals with unmet emotional needs
afraid/uncertain of how others might react	afraid of what others may say or think about him/her
sense of helplessness, powerlessness, fear of failure	feeling helpless, powerless, terrified of doing something wrong
guilt or fear of hurting others	feels guilty, shows signs of fearfulness, undue worry
conflict avoidance, anger avoidance	would rather play it safe than to take risks or try new things
fear of rejection	feels rejected, unwanted
self-doubt, self-consciousness, inferiority, feels badly about oneself	decreased personal worth, believes others are better and smarter, low self-confidence, feels small, inadequate, and incompetent
feeling unprepared	needs to, but does not feel prepared to handle challenging situations
uncertain of self/situation	does not have a sense of understanding of him/herself, frustrated by a lack of understanding of things and situations.

Table 5

Comparison of subjects' expressed willingness to risk rejection, strategy to protect against rejection, or no fear of rejection with Raths' indicators of met emotional needs

Expression by subjects of no fear of rejection, willingness to risk rejection, or strategy to protect against rejection	Raths' indicators of individuals with met emotional needs
certain of self/situation	a feeling of being wanted, able to understand what s/he is doing, comfortable with his/her understanding of things and situations
self-confidence	inner security, independence, has a sense of having influence in his/her environment
free from guilt	able to see that mistakes made are an asset
strong belief	has a sense of direction and purpose to his/her life
feeling prepared	feels able to handle challenging situations

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Since emotions play a consistent and functional role in assertiveness, one can conclude that principles which are able to attend to the emotional component of assertiveness can and ought to be applied to existing behavioral notions of assertiveness. This can be accomplished by adding a humanistic perspective. These two schools (humanism and behaviorism), with seemingly separate ideas about behavior can be fruitfully shared to further our understanding of, and intervention in promoting assertiveness. Since assertion and nonassertion are uniquely expressed by each

individual, it is possible to conclude that assertiveness training might be more effective if tailored to meet the needs of particular individuals. Since the way people are perceived by individuals affects assertiveness, it may be reasonable to expect that skills which aid in the perception of not only oneself, but also of others would enhance assertiveness (e.g., listening and self-awareness skills). And, since having a strongly held belief appears to be related to one's ability to be assertive, it may also be reasonable to expect that adding skills such as "values clarification" to assertiveness training would be advantageous. What follows is a discussion of the aforementioned conclusions.

#### Emotional component

If the degree to which emotional needs are satisfied is part of the wellspring that gives life to assertion and nonassertion, learning to be assertive ought to include a means of attending to them. This is not to suggest that behavioral techniques be replaced with humanistic ones, but rather that they be blended in such a way that more than surface behavior is emphasized. For emotions that are seen to relate to emotional needs, this could be accomplished by adapting existing behaviorally oriented assertiveness training programs with ideas laid out by Rath which are aimed at meeting emotional needs. Briefly, this might involve the following:

1. Meeting the need for belonging: Exercises which encourage participants to get to know one another (e.g., self-introductions, name tags, breaking up into pairs and introducing one another, occasional pot lucks or other social encounters during training).

2. Meeting the need for achievement: Exercises which allow participants to report on their successes. Genuine and realistic encouragement (praise) by the trainer and other participants. Breaking into pairs or small groups to encourage participants to help one another. Clarify and reflect on undesirable behavior and treat mistakes as part of learning.

3. Meeting the need for economic security: A sliding scale for training fees based on financial need, seeing that participants from all socio-economic groups are encouraged to interact with one another.

4. Meeting the need to be free from fear : Insuring that fear is not further cultivated by setting unobtainable standards. Appropriately matching individuals (i.e., do not pair a very shy person with another individual who might intimidate him/her). Acknowledge and accept the presence of fears rather than saying "There's nothing to be afraid of". Emphasize the understanding of fears.

5. Meeting the need for love and affection: Friendliness on the part of the trainer. Use of sincere tone of voice. Lavish extra warmth and affection on those who appear to have a greater need for love and affection. Acknowledge absences by saying s/he was missed.

6. Need to be free from guilt: Acknowledge that mistakes are part of learning and praise the process rather than the end product of learning.

7. Need for self-respect: The trainer, by having respect for him/herself, is equipped to cultivate self-respect in others.

Give consideration to participant's ideas by encouraging them to share in some of the decision making. Provide an opportunity for participants to evaluate their work, in order to avoid participant's getting the impression that their work is being done for the trainer.

8. Need for self-understanding: Provide a structured yet permissive atmosphere (i.e., an environment in which people are free to ask questions). Raise questions which stimulate self-understanding.

In addition, theorists other than Raths are concerned with identifying the emotional needs of an individual. Rogers' (1961) therapeutic model considers these needs. He has a description for nonassertive individuals--these are individuals very much like Annie, the hypothetical woman in the introductory chapter of this thesis:

Often [s]he discovers that [s]he exists only in response to the demands of others, that [s]he seems to have no self of [her]his own, that [s]he is only trying to think, and feel, and behave in the way that others believe [s]he ought to think, and feel and behave (p. 80).

In a Rogerian client-centered relationship, individuals are able to explore their own experience and to discover the contradictions of their genuine needs and the superficial needs imposed upon them by others which have restricted their behavior. In addition to attending to the emotional needs, it would appear that methods which encourage self-exploration (self-awareness) might be a useful and important adjunct to existing assertiveness training methods.



## Self-awareness

Fundamental to assertiveness is an awareness of who one is. To be assertive, one needs to be personally aware of what his/her wants, needs, and desires are before one can have them met. Personal awareness is gained by looking inside (exploring and pinpointing real feelings), and outside (being aware of the context of the situation, and what is going on for the other person). As can be seen from the review of the popular literature on assertiveness, most assertiveness training programs focus on surface behavior, dealing with symptoms, and ignore or deemphasize the importance of understanding one's feelings, needs, and desires which contributes to shaping one's behavior. Particularly for those who have overly invested in meeting the needs of others as a means of demonstrating their self-worth, methods may be required to help them become aware of their feelings and to identify their needs.

Some adaptations that could, if added to the assertiveness training repertoire, cultivate self-awareness are as follows:

1. Personal journals: Diaries or structured journals (much like the one used in the present study), provide a means by which individuals can gain personal awareness. Specifically, journals aid in: a) the identification of specific areas of strength and difficulty; b) the identification of an individual's unique behavior patterns, and; c) the clarification of one's feelings and thoughts, body signals, as well as numerous other indicators unique to each individual. Journals ought to be structured to match the individual's ability to be articulate. The less articulate, the more structured the journal (perhaps even to the point of

using multiple-choice type questions).

2. Video or audio taping: Taping, whether it be audio and/or visual can provide a wealth of feedback in terms of personal awareness. Individuals are able to catch a glimpse at how others see them. Use of language, tone of voice, and body posture are all magnified for the person watching him/herself.

3. Trainer's use of empathy: Empathic responses on the part of the trainer create a safe environment in which there is a freedom for the expression and acceptance of feelings. In being free and encouraged to express feelings, one has another opportunity to become more personally aware.

#### Other-awareness

In order to cultivate an understanding of where and when a response is suitable, and to be able to be "empathically assertive" (Jakubowski, 1979), one might benefit from being able to judge not only his/her own reactions in rendering and making a response, but also by being able to discriminate the reactions of the person receiving the response. According to Carkhuff (1969), trainers can aid individuals in learning to make these judgments through the following helping process in which:

the helpee learns to discriminate first his own experiences and then the expressions of the experiences of others. Whereas he learns through the helper's responsiveness to him to respond to himself with accuracy, he concurrently learns the ingredients of responding effectively to others (p. 81).

In addition, by adding the question "what was the other person thinking or feeling?" to the structured journal, one's awareness is expanded from oneself to the other involved in the interaction.

### Individual assertiveness needs

Even though clear patterns emerged between individuals which demonstrated certain relationships and commonalities, the finding in the present study that assertion and nonassertion was expressed uniquely by each individual indicates the importance of taking into account the idiosyncratic needs of each individual. Some individuals are assertive in certain situations with certain types of people, and nonassertive in others. Some individuals are more or less able to be assertive than other individuals in the same situation. What this suggests is that no one training package may be applicable to all aspects of assertive behavior and that a means of assessing individual needs in terms of assertiveness, and then fitting the training to them may be warranted. Assertiveness training groups, then, could be comprised of individuals who have been identified as having similar assertive needs.

In general, assertiveness training programs do not seem to take into account the possibility that participant's assertiveness needs are likely to be different, and instruments designed to measure and identify assertiveness primarily assess behavioral acts. These instruments are useful in predicting assertiveness across populations. However, when one moves from the level of making predictions regarding the population in general to making predictions about the assertive behavior of a particular individual, instruments that are based on whole populations may be of little value. This investigator was unable to locate any instruments that were designed to measure individual assertiveness (ones which would measure the process of assertiveness in an indi-

vidual). Without an instrument to measure the process of assertiveness, a basic question remains "unresolved in response acquisition [deficit] approaches, namely, what is the specific nature of the deficit in nonassertive subjects?" (Schwartz and Gottman, 1976, p. 912). The absence of instruments designed to measure the process of assertiveness, impedes not only a fuller understanding of assertiveness in general, but also confounds the understanding of assertiveness in individuals. In order to understand the process of assertiveness, "the individual client is the key mediating variable" (Rich and Schroeder, 1976, p. 359), and the ideal approach is to perform N=1 studies (Ibid).

#### "Values clarification"

The findings in the present study suggest that having a strongly held belief is associated with one's ability to be assertive. According to Raths (1978), values (which are formed out of strongly held beliefs, feelings, attitudes, or interests), give direction to one's life. Individuals with strongly held beliefs and clearly defined values tend to behave in a more purposeful way. Individuals who do not live a value-directed life tend to over-conform, are other-directed, and are bewildered by choices available to them. Their lack of clarity about the meaning of their lives results in either apathy, inconsistency, or over-dissention.

One's ability to be assertive is also tied to one's belief system. One's belief system provides the backdrop upon which assertive rights are put into focus. Individuals who are clear about their rights are more likely to be assertive (Bloom, 1975).

Individuals who are unclear of their rights behave in almost learning like ways, accepting and operating out of beliefs that may be common to our culture, but which may be incompatible with one's genuine self and one's ability to be assertive (e.g., good friends should never refuse to do a favour; it is bad for me to let others know I am confused; I must always be consistent, and, I must always be polite).

Through trainers' use of the clarifying response ("a response that encourages someone to look at his or her life and ideas and to think about them" (Raths, 1978, p. 55)), in an atmosphere of positive acceptance, individuals may be provided with an opportunity to formulate their own belief system.

### III. IMPLICATIONS

#### Implications for assertiveness training

The suggestion that assertiveness training should include the emotional component of assertiveness from a humanistic perspective, and that it should include self-awareness, other-awareness, and exposure to "values clarification" has certain implications. Specifically, these relate to the skills required of the trainers as well as the methods used in assertiveness training. In addition to skills required to teach techniques related to response deficits, trainers would be required to have expertise in empathy, listening, and clarifying skills, and methods would be required which enhance not only responses, but also listening, empathy, and clarifying on the part of the assertiveness training participant. Because assertiveness varies from person to person, methods should be adapted to meet the needs of particular indivi-

duals.

### Implications for assertiveness research

Perhaps the most fundamental implication that can be made from the present study involves viewing assertiveness as a process rather than a set of specific responses to particular situations. Assertiveness appears to involve more than surface behavior, and appears to be different from individual to individual. As its definition implies, assertiveness involves one's response, emotions, cognitions, and the context of the situation. Not only is assertiveness made up of a number of parts, it is composed of the relationship of these parts to one another. Just as one cannot make a car by going to an auto parts store and throwing all the parts into a shopping cart (Todtman, 1985), assertiveness, like a car, is made up of the interrelatedness of its parts. Responses, emotions, cognitions, and context are the parts that make up the complex, interrelated, interactive constellation called assertiveness.

Current research on assertiveness appears to either ignore components other than overt behavior, or treats as monads or individual entities (i.e., not related to the other components), the various parts that make up assertiveness. Attempting to understand assertiveness by examining only one of its parts can be likened to attempting to study  $H_2O$  (one part hydrogen and two parts oxygen) by studying hydrogen. It seems that assertiveness, like water, would be best understood by studying the entire structure, not only its singular entities, but also their interaction.

An important consideration to be made in assertiveness

research is that reciprocity exists in an assertive interaction. Not only are person's responses influenced by another person (and vice versa), but also one's behavior, emotions, and thoughts affect one another.

It appears to be important to consider the entire process of assertiveness because "when we focus too narrowly on the parts, we fail to see the necessary characteristics of the whole" (Keeney, 1984, p. 164).

#### Implications for further study

1. For those who believe that clinical intervention must be based on measurable data, the claims of the present study (based on a non-random sample) await statistical investigation.

2. The question, "What might one with an emotional deficit gain from assertiveness training which focuses on response deficits" requires further examination, as well as the question "Might it be hurtful to some individuals to ignore the emotional component in assertiveness training (e.g., create another failure).

3. Whether there are particular problems that respond best to assertiveness training, and whether there are problems with which assertiveness training might be a contraindication (e.g., might assertiveness training for an individual in a physically abusive environment be an inappropriate intervention), requires further investigation.

4. Since assertiveness training is a helping process, it might be useful to research the criteria for a helping relationship in order to establish whether assertiveness training meets those criteria.

5. Instruments aimed at delineating assertiveness components should include behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and situational variables. Perhaps this would increase the validity of measurements of assertiveness which is a major weakness of current research in this area.

6. It appears to be warranted to devise a screening scale based upon an individual's assertiveness needs (e.g., one that measures the process of assertiveness).

7. It would add to the knowledge of assertiveness to know whether individuals like the subjects in the present study, who are highly skilled in verbal communication, are able to be more assertive by virtue of their high verbal ability. In other words, is high verbal ability a necessary component to assertiveness? Can an individual with low verbal ability be highly assertive? And, does a person's dominant mode of communication affect his/her ability to be assertive?

Research investigations focusing on these and other related questions ought to bring us one step forward in our understanding and ability to treat people who have great difficulty in behaving assertively.



## Appendix A

## Sample Questionnaire

Instructions

I'm asking you and a few other women I know who are articulate and self-aware to participate in the research I am doing on assertiveness. In this research, I am not interested in whether an individual is assertive or non-assertive (for I believe that we act assertively and non-assertively throughout our daily lives). Rather, I am interested in the deeper process by which one's assertive behavior is either enhanced or inhibited.

To help me explore this aspect of assertiveness, I'd like you to take this journal, keep it for four weeks, and complete the questions that relate to ten different situations. Five of these situations are to be about times you found yourself in situations you felt required assertion and in which you were able to act assertively; the other five are to relate to situations you knew required assertion but which you were unable to act assertively.

This process will require you to pay close attention to the numerous interactions you are involved in throughout the day, and then to record them as precisely and succinctly as possible. It is important to point out that assertiveness means knowing what you need and want, and being able to make this clear to others in a way that includes respect for others. Put simply, it is clear, honest and respectful communication about oneself. Assertiveness involves both negative and positive feelings. You may, therefore, wish to include in your journal situations such as receiving or giving someone a compliment.

You need not concern yourself about writing about "interesting" situations; just write about those situations that seem important to you. You may feel self-conscious while keeping the journal; this is to be expected and is a reasonable reaction to being asked to scrutinize oneself and then to record this in a journal for someone else to read. Knowing this, I'm particularly grateful and honoured to have you participate in this study. I will treat the journals with utmost confidentiality, and anonymity will be protected throughout.

This page is for the situations you felt required assertion and in which you were able to act assertively.

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Physical symptoms: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How I felt (emotions): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I was thinking: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I did (my behavior): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

To what do I attribute my ability to be assertive in this situation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This page is for the situations you knew required assertion but which you were unable to act assertively.

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Physical symptoms: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How I felt (emotions): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I was thinking: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I did (my behavior): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I would have liked to have done: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Why I didn't do what I wanted to do: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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