

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONAL ETHICS SCALE*

Terry D. Hargrave
University of Mississippi
Glen Jennings William Anderson
Texas Woman's University

In order for empirical testing to be performed systematically on family therapy theories, appropriate testing instruments must be developed and validated. The purpose of this study was to develop a reliable and valid scale for measuring the related constructs of relational ethics as described in contextual family therapy (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). Presented here is the five-stage procedure used in developing the Relational Ethics Scale, data supporting the validity and reliability of the scale, and the final version of the instrument.

Kolevzon and Green (1985) describe the field of family therapy as deriving methodology from what the founders believed to be true about human behavior and the way they actually did therapy. They state that since these methodologies came almost exclusively in reaction to clinical practice, divergent views of effective therapy developed. They cite a need for empirical testing of various approaches to identify sound approaches as well as characteristics and techniques which are similar and different.

Contextual therapy (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1981), one of the emerging theories of family therapy, needs this type of empirical testing. In order to facilitate systematic empirical testing, appropriate testing instruments need to be developed. The purpose of this research study was to develop a reliable and valid scale to measure relational ethics, the most essential concept of contextual therapy.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

General Information

Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, one of the founders of the family therapy movement in the United States, developed his therapeutic style from psychiatry, psychoanalysis, systems theory, and philosophy (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). His personal evolution as a therapist led him to develop an integrative approach in dealing with the complexity of human existence between individual and relational realities. The essence of contextual therapy is the healing of human relationships through commitment and trust while

*The following article is based on dissertation research in partial fulfillment of degree requirements at Texas Woman's University.

Terry D. Hargrave, PhD, is Assistant Professor of Family Relations, Department of Home Economics, University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677.

Glen Jennings, EdD, is Professor, Department of Family Sciences, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX 76204.

William Anderson, EdD, is Assistant Professor, Department of Family Sciences, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX 76204.

building interpersonal components of loyalty, fairness, and reciprocity (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984).

Contextual therapy is based on the premise that there are four dimensions of relational reality that must be considered in therapy (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986):

Facts. Facts are anchored in existing environmental, relational, and individual factors that are objectifiable. They include factors such as genetic input, physical health, basic historical facts, and events in a person's life cycle.

Individual psychology. The individual's psychology is the subjective internal psychological integration of his or her experiences and motivations. Individual psychology produces subjective influences on relationships as individuals strive for recognition, love, power, and pleasure and are motivated by aggression, mastery, or ambivalence.

Family or systemic transactions. Family or systemic transactions are the communication or interaction patterns of relationships. The objectifiable transactions produce organization or laws which define power alignments, structure, and belief systems.

Relational ethics. Relational ethics deals with the subjective balance of trustworthiness, justice, loyalty, merit, and entitlement between members of a relationship. As members of the relationship interact in an interdependent fashion, relational ethics requires them to assume responsibility for consequences and strive for fairness and equity in the process of give and take.

Relational Ethics

Although Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986) view the four dimensions as inseparable from each other, they believe mobilizing resources in the relational ethics dimension is the most important factor in healing dysfunctional relationships in therapy. This fourth dimension has received little attention in psychological research (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987).

Relational ethics is rooted initially in the idea that individuals are dependent upon relationship to experience self-understanding and self-delineation (Buber, 1958). In other words, without the experience of relating, giving, and receiving from another person, an individual has an insufficient basis to experience emotions and thought. Relational ethics is also based on an innate sense of fairness or justice in all individuals (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). This sense of justice demands that there be balance in relationship between what an individual is entitled to receive from the relationship and what he or she is obligated to give to maintain the relationship.

When individuals have relationships in which there is a balance of giving what the relationship requires and receiving what each person is entitled to, this innate sense of fairness is satisfied (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1980). When this balance of give and take continues over a period of time, individuals in the relationship experience a sense of trustworthiness. This trust enables each individual in the relationship to continue giving to the other person. There is a confidence that the individual's entitled needs and wants will be met by the other person without manipulation or threats of retribution. Each person gives because he or she trusts the other person to give (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). The balanced fairness of give and take in a relationship over a period of time, therefore, produces and satisfies each individual's sense of trust and justice (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987).

When there is an imbalance or injustice in this ledger of relationship give and take, dysfunction often occurs (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984). Individuals who are unjustly damaged by not receiving care, nurturing, love, and warmth from the relationship will often seek a just merit for these emotions and care, but in a destructive manner (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). This destructive entitlement of merit is the individual's claim toward self-justifying compensation; this can manifest itself in

many ways, including paranoid attitudes, hostility, emotional cutoffs, and destructive behavior (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). When this imbalance or injustice occurs in relationships over a period of time, destructive and untrustworthy relationships are produced (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987).

In the family, there is an intergenerational ledger of entitlements and obligations. In other words, individuals in the family inherit a legacy of either balanced, fair, and trustworthy relationships or a legacy of imbalanced, unfair, and untrustworthy relationships (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1987). The dimension of relational ethics demands that each person be responsible to his or her innate sense of justice. If the family has produced fair exchange in giving and receiving in relation to its members, each individual will carry a balanced ethic into other relationships; however, if the family has produced injustices and the individual does not experience his or her just entitlement, he or she will be driven to compensate for this violation (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984). Instead of feeling the freedom and self-delineation necessary for giving, the individual will feel justified in manipulating or demanding that his or her entitled needs be met. Most often, individuals will move to satisfy this entitlement through their children, which in turn produces injustices and distrust in the children's experience. This is an intense cycle of loyalty and entitlement that originates in past generations and is passed along in a slate of distrust and injustice (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1984). Boszormenyi-Nagy suggests that the dimension of relational ethics is rooted in the emotional field of the family and individual (personal communication, October 14, 1988). It governs the individual's actions in relationships and demands that merits be sought and that obligations be met.

Relational ethics exists in two types of relationships (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987). First, the ethical dimension exists in *vertical* relationships between succeeding generations, such as parents and children. These relationships, although just and fair, are asymmetrical in give and take by nature. Second, the ethical dimension exists in *horizontal* relationships between partners of equal positions who have mutual obligation and expectation of each other, such as spouses, siblings, and friends. These relationships are symmetrical in give and take and should be equal (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987).

Rationale for Scale Development

Relational ethics as described in the contextual approach is an action or process dimension that incorporates both individual and relational realities. As such, relational ethics transcends individual balances of entitlements and obligations and also includes the realm of relationships between family members. Individuals in significant relationships are responsible for actions on the relational ledger pertaining not only to themselves, but also to the consequences of how their actions affect each other. The relational dimension, therefore, includes and transcends both the psychological and systemic dimensions (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986).

Since the relational ethics dimension encompasses both intrapersonal and interpersonal concepts, it is difficult to determine which perspective to measure in a scale which assesses the construct. It is not apparent from descriptions of the contextual framework how assessment of interpersonal aspects of relational ledgers are determined by the therapist. It is clear from the literature, however, that assessment of the dimension of relational ethics in the therapeutic process proceeds from the therapist exploring each individual's balance of fairness (i.e., Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). The role of the therapist revolves around the recognition of the multilateral nature of individual and family relational issues (Kaslow, 1987). Acting as an advocate for all individuals within the relational context, the contextual therapist uses multidirectional partiality in finding and utilizing resources in the family in order

to address imbalances in the dimension of relational ethics (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981). It is necessary, therefore, to consider the individual's stance in the relational dimension as the most logical element to provide information about the intrapersonal aspects of relational ethics as well as perceptions concerning the interpersonal dimensions of the family. Following this logic, the authors decided to use a self-report instrument in the scale development.

The concept of relational ethics in the literature, although quite identifiable in vertical relationships, is less clear as it applies to horizontal relationships. However, individuals exist simultaneously in both vertical and horizontal relationships, and the relational dimension is affected by both (Van Heusden & Van Den Eerenbeemt, 1987). It was logical and necessary, therefore, to measure relational ethics as it applied to both vertical and horizontal relationships. To facilitate this end, the authors developed a scale which measured relational ethics as it applied to the relationships of subjects with the family in which they were raised and one other relationship with a person of equal relational status. The different nature of vertical and horizontal relationships demanded that the self-report instrument have separate sections to address each type of relationship.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELATIONAL ETHICS SCALE

Introduction

A five-stage procedure was selected for developing the Relational Ethics Scale. In stage one, definitions were developed for relational ethics and corresponding constructs. In stage two, statements were generated for use in the Relational Ethics Scale. In stage three, the preliminary Relational Ethics Scale was developed and tested with a sample number of subjects. In stage four, a revised Relational Ethics Scale based on the preliminary results from stage three was tested with another sample of subjects in order to determine predictive validity. Finally, in stage five, the Relational Ethics Scale was correlated with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire using the scores of sample number of subjects.

Stage One: Definitions

Indicators and possible constructs of the relational ethics dimension were identified by a review of literature on contextual therapy and by discussions with Boszormenyi-Nagy. Definitions were formulated by the authors from composites of the following: writings from Boszormenyi-Nagy; definitions as they occur in the literature; and examples of the constructs as identified in specific case examples in the literature. After the definitions were formed, they were reviewed by Boszormenyi-Nagy, who was the final judge in determining face validity of the definitions.

Stage Two: Statement Formation

Statements were generated by the authors of the scale which reflected the various content of relational ethics according to the definitions developed in stage one. These statements were written to be used in a self-report instrument so subjects could respond based on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Seventy-one statements reflecting relational ethics in vertical relationships and 65 statements reflecting relational ethics in horizontal relationships were rated by a panel of eight experts in the field of contextual therapy in order to determine the face validity of the statements. The experts utilized in this study had taken part in training with Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy or were associated with either The Institute for Contextual Growth or the Center for Contextual Therapy and Allied Studies. Each expert also met at least two of the following criteria: a graduate degree in psychology, psychiatry, or marriage and family therapy; two years of clinical

practice utilizing contextual therapy; recognition by peers through published work on the subject of contextual therapy.

Statements were judged acceptable for use in the scale based on consistency and frequency ratings of the panel of experts. A statement was considered consistent if no more than one of the eight expert ratings was below a 4 on the 5-point Likert-type scale. A statement met frequency requirements if it received at least 80% of the total points possible from the combined expert rating. Thirty-four vertical and 29 horizontal statements met the rating criteria from the experts. Five of the statements were dropped from the rating by the authors because the statements duplicated content of other statements. As a result, 31 vertical and 27 horizontal relationship statements were used to make up the preliminary Relational Ethics Scale.

Stage Three: Testing the Preliminary Scale

In order to test the statements validated by the panel of experts, a preliminary Relational Ethics Scale was administered to a sample of 290 volunteer subjects. The preliminary Relational Ethics Scale required responses according to a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The purpose of this stage was: (a) to establish item and construct validity based on the particular statements, (b) to establish or confirm constructs of the relational ethics dimension, (c) to measure internal reliability of the instrument, and (d) to develop a revised Relational Ethics Scale to be used in determining the predictive validity of the scale (see Table 1).

Subjects. A total of 290 volunteer subjects participated in completing the preliminary Relational Ethics Scale. The ages of the subjects ranged from 21 to 88 with a mean of 38.4 years ($SD = 12.38$). Six individuals collected data from a variety of blue-collar and professional job sites (e.g., meat packing plant, nursing home, bank, hospital, university) with the approval of appropriate personnel officials. The recruitment of volunteers from the various job sites was done with the intention of selecting participants from different ethnic, economic, and marital status groups. The ethnicity of the sample was as follows: 7.6% Black, 6.9% Hispanic, .3% Asian, and 85.2% White. The marital status of the sample was as follows: 72.4% married, 12.4% divorced, 11.4% single, and 3.8% widowed.

A total of 197 females and 93 males participated in the initial preliminary testing. Using the variable of gender, there were no significant differences in the scores on the Relational Ethics Scale and vertical and horizontal constructs for females (Total Score $M = 75.0$; Vertical Statement Total $M = 36.0$; Horizontal Statement Total $M = 39.1$) or males (Total Score $M = 73.3$; Vertical Statement Total $M = 34.8$; Horizontal Statement Total $M = 38.3$).

Item validity. Since vertical and horizontal relationships are different by definition, total scores of subjects were determined for both sets of statements separately. An item analysis revealed that 30 out of 31 vertical statements successfully discriminated between the top and bottom quartiles of scores at a significant level ($p < .05$). The item analysis also revealed that 25 out of the 27 horizontal statements discriminated between the top and bottom quartile scores at a significant level ($p < .05$). Item analysis data for the statements which were used in the revised Relational Ethics Scale are found in Table 2.

Component analysis. The component analysis revealed three factors for vertical relationship statements and three factors for horizontal relationship statements. All vertical statements loaded on at least one of the three factors and 23 of the horizontal statements loaded at or above the .40 level. The six factors were named as follows: vertical trust and justice, vertical loyalty, vertical entitlement, horizontal trust and justice, horizontal loyalty, and horizontal entitlement. Summary data for the loading of statements used in the revised Relational Ethics Scale are found in Table 3.

Table 1
Relational Ethics Scale

Directions: This scale is designed to measure some of the emotions that:

- existed in the family in which you were raised.
- currently exist in one of your other relationships.

Since each person and family is unique, there are no right or wrong answers. Just try to respond as honestly as you can. *Please respond to every statement.*

Rate statements 1–12 as they apply to the family and parent(s) with whom you spent most of your childhood.

In reading the following statements, apply them to yourself and your family and then circle the rating that best fits.

- 5 = STRONGLY AGREE with the statement.
- 4 = AGREE with the statement.
- 3 = NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE with the statement.
- 2 = DISAGREE with the statement.
- 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE with the statement.

1. I could trust my family to seek my best interests.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Individuals in my family were blamed for problems that were not their fault.	5	4	3	2	1
3. Pleasing one of my parents often meant displeasing the other.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I received the love and affection from my family I deserved.	5	4	3	2	1
5. No matter what happened, I always stood by my family.	5	4	3	2	1
6. At times, it seemed one or both of my parents disliked me.	5	4	3	2	1
7. Love and warmth were given equally to all family members.	5	4	3	2	1
8. At times, I was used by my family unfairly.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I felt my life was dominated by my parents' desires.	5	4	3	2	1
10. Individuals in my family were willing to give of themselves to benefit the family.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I continue to seek closer relationships with my family.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I often felt deserted by my family.	5	4	3	2	1

Please respond to statements 13–24 as they apply to *one* relationship in your life.

- If you are MARRIED, rate the statements as they apply to your relationship with your spouse.
- If you are WIDOWED, rate the statements as you recall they applied to your relationship with your spouse.
- If you are DIVORCED OR SINGLE, rate the statements as they apply to your closest relationship excluding parents or children.

In reading the following statements, apply them to yourself and the appropriate relationship and then circle the rating that best fits.

- 5 = STRONGLY AGREE with the statement.
- 4 = AGREE with the statement.
- 3 = NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE with the statement.
- 2 = DISAGREE with the statement.
- 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE with the statement.

13. I try to meet the emotional needs of this person.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I do not trust this individual to look out for my best interests.	5	4	3	2	1

Table 1 continued

15. When I feel hurt, I say or do hurtful things to this person.	5	4	3	2	1
16. This person stands beside me in times of trouble or joy.	5	4	3	2	1
17. Before I make important decisions, I ask for the opinions of this person.	5	4	3	2	1
18. There is unequal contribution to the relationship between me and this individual.	5	4	3	2	1
19. When I feel angry, I tend to take it out on this person.	5	4	3	2	1
20. We are equal partners in this relationship.	5	4	3	2	1
21. We give of ourselves to benefit one another.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I take advantage of this individual.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I am taken for granted or used unfairly in this relationship.	5	4	3	2	1
24. This person listens to me and values my thoughts.	5	4	3	2	1

The data clearly indicated that the statements pertaining to vertical and horizontal trust and justice loaded on those factors at the highest levels. Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1986) maintain that trust and justice are the essential constructs of relational ethics. It was decided, therefore, that the construct of trust and justice should be reflected in the revised Relational Ethics Scale with more statements than the factors of loyalty and entitlement.

The vertical loyalty, vertical entitlement, horizontal loyalty, and horizontal entitlement constructs were represented in the revised scale with three statements each. The vertical trust and justice and horizontal trust and justice constructs were represented with six statements each. The authors of the scale selected the best statements for each of the six factors that reflected the original definitions in stage one for use in the revised scale.

Reliability. A Cronbach's Alpha analysis was performed on each set of vertical and horizontal statements as well as the total set of statements. Reliability for the vertical and horizontal statements was between .93 and .96. Reliability for the total scale was computed at .96.

A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis performed on the data from the vertical and horizontal statements revealed a .54 correlation ($p < .001$). Although this correlation was significant, it indicated that the two sets of statements had a shared variance of about 30% ($r^2 = .2916$).

Stage Four: Testing of the Revised Scale

The 24-item revised Relational Ethics Scale was tested with another group of volunteer subjects in order to determine predictive validity of the scale. The null hypothesis of this stage of the study was that there would be no significant differences between the Relational Ethics Scale scores of functional, well-adjusted individuals and dysfunctional, maladjusted individuals.

Subjects. Eighty volunteer subjects were identified to take the revised scale. Three marriage and family therapists, two with masters degrees and one with a doctorate in marriage and family therapy, were asked to identify clients who displayed either dysfunctional or well-adjusted family relationships and would be willing to participate in the study. The 80 subjects identified for the predictive validity study were divided into two groups: 41 representing a group displaying dysfunctional family relationships and 39 displaying well-adjusted family relationships. The ages of the subjects ranged

Table 2
Item Analysis of Statements in Revised Relational Ethics Scale

Statement	Chi-Square Q1 vs. Q4	D.F.	Level of Significance
1. I could trust my family to seek my best interests.	139.67	4	.01
2. Individuals in my family were blamed for problems that were not their fault.	124.87	4	.01
3. Pleasing one of my parents often meant displeasing the other.	119.81	4	.01
4. I received the love and affection from my family I deserved.	140.68	4	.01
5. No matter what happened, I always stood by my family.	81.02	4	.01
6. At times, it seemed one or both of my parents disliked me.	138.00	4	.01
7. Love and warmth were given equally to all family members.	150.40	4	.01
8. At times, I was used by my family unfairly.	138.32	4	.01
9. I felt my life was dominated by my parents' desires.	78.29	4	.01
10. Individuals in my family were willing to give of themselves to benefit the family.	90.06	4	.01
11. I continue to seek closer relationships with my family.	92.69	4	.01
12. I often felt deserted by my family.	124.43	4	.01
13. I try to meet the emotional needs of this person.	81.94	4	.01
14. I do not trust this individual to look out for my best interests.	130.64	4	.01
15. When I feel hurt, I say or do hurtful things to this person.	87.46	4	.01
16. This person stands beside me in times of trouble or joy.	152.32	4	.01
17. Before I make important decisions, I ask for the opinions of this person.	71.27	4	.01
18. There is unequal contribution to the relationship between me and this individual.	134.42	4	.01
19. When I feel angry, I tend to take it out on this person.	63.67	4	.01
20. We are equal partners in this relationship.	147.73	4	.01
21. We give of ourselves to benefit one another.	108.04	4	.01
22. I take advantage of this individual.	60.06	4	.01
23. I am taken for granted or used unfairly in this relationship.	143.67	4	.01
24. This person listens to me and values my thoughts.	140.15	4	.01

Table 3
Factor Loading of Relational Ethics Scale Statements by Construct

Statement	Construct	Factor Loading
<i>Factor One: Vertical Trust and Justice</i>		
1. I could trust my family to seek my best interests.		.598
2. Individuals in my family were blamed for problems that were not their fault.		.792
7. Love and warmth were given equally to all family members.		.707
8. At times, I was used by my family unfairly.		.760
10. Individuals in my family were willing to give of themselves to benefit the family.		.482
12. I often felt deserted by my family.		.760
<i>Factor Two: Vertical Loyalty</i>		
3. Pleasing one of my parents often meant displeasing the other.		.423
5. No matter what happened, I always stood by my family.		.673
11. I continue to seek closer relationships with my family.		.617
<i>Factor Three: Vertical Entitlement</i>		
4. I received the love and affection from my family I deserved.		-.654
6. At times, it seemed one or both of my parents disliked me.		-.826
9. I felt my life was dominated by my parents' desires.		-.666
<i>Factor Four: Horizontal Trust and Justice</i>		
14. I do not trust this individual to look out for my best interests.		.780
16. This person stands beside me in times of trouble or joy.		.832
18. There is unequal contribution to the relationship between me and this individual.		.755
20. We are equal partners in this relationship.		.803
23. I am taken for granted or used unfairly in this relationship.		.808
24. This person listens to me and values my thoughts.		.828
<i>Factor Five: Horizontal Loyalty</i>		
13. I try to meet the emotional needs of this person.		.633
17. Before I make important decisions, I ask for the opinions of this person.		.611
21. We give of ourselves to benefit one another.		.467
<i>Factor Six: Horizontal Entitlement</i>		
15. When I feel hurt, I say or do hurtful things to this person.		.752
19. When I feel angry, I tend to take it out on this person.		.806
22. I take advantage of this individual.		.564

from 22 to 78 with a mean of 38.3 years. The sample in this stage of testing consisted of 54 females and 26 males. The revised scale again required subjects to respond on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Analysis. Two-tailed *t*-tests were computed for the dysfunctional and well-adjusted groups on total scores of the Relational Ethics Scale as well as for scores on each of the six separate constructs. The scores on the Relational Ethics Scale as a whole, as well as the sets of vertical and horizontal statements and the six constructs, revealed significant differences between the two groups. Summary data for the *t*-test analysis performed on the revised test scores are found in Table 4.

Table 4
Differences Between Dysfunctional and Well-Adjusted Group Scores

Variable	Number of Cases	SD	Mean	t-value	D.F.	2-tail Probability
<i>Vertical Trust and Justice</i>				5.98	78	.001
Group 1	39	4.50	22.3			
Group 2	41	4.97	11.7			
<i>Vertical Loyalty</i>				5.43	78	.001
Group 1	39	1.57	11.6			
Group 2	41	2.65	7.3			
<i>Vertical Entitlement</i>				3.68	78	.001
Group 1	39	2.81	10.1			
Group 2	41	2.50	6.1			
<i>Horizontal Trust and Justice</i>				3.87	78	.001
Group 1	39	5.12	22.9			
Group 2	41	5.05	14.1			
<i>Horizontal Loyalty</i>				4.46	78	.001
Group 1	39	1.23	12.5			
Group 2	41	2.96	8.4			
<i>Horizontal Entitlement</i>				4.18	78	.001
Group 1	39	1.92	11.2			
Group 2	41	3.11	7.2			
<i>Vertical Statements (Total)</i>				6.47	78	.001
Group 1	39	7.24	44.1			
Group 2	41	7.01	24.8			
<i>Horizontal Statements (Total)</i>				4.39	78	.001
Group 1	39	6.48	46.9			
Group 2	41	10.97	32.7			

Reliability. Another Cronbach's Alpha analysis was performed on the revised Relational Ethics Scale. The total scale reliability was .93 and the reliability for the vertical and horizontal sets of statements was computed at .91 and .94, respectively.

Stage Five: Correlations with Other Scales

In order to follow accepted psychometric procedures in developing a new scale and provide concurrent validity, scores from the Relational Ethics Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire were correlated. The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) is a 32-item scale that measures marital and other dyadic adjustment according to four subscales of Dyadic Consensus, Dyadic Cohesion, Dyadic Satisfaction, and Affectional Expression. The Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire (Bray, Williamson, & Malone, 1984) consists of 132 items that relate to eight subscales of Spousal Intimacy, Spousal Fusion/Individuation, Nuclear Family Triangulation, Intergenerational Intimacy, Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation, Intergenerational Triangulation, Intergenerational Intimidation, and Personal Authority.

Subjects. The authors recruited 36 volunteer subjects willing to complete the three scales. All participants in this final stage of testing were married and were students, staff, or friends in the communities of the two universities where the authors are employed. The ages of the subjects ranged from 21 to 63 with the mean of the sample being 35.4 years; there were 22 females and 14 males.

Analysis. Correlation data from the three scales are presented in Table 5.

Overall, the correlations between the vertical subscales of the Relational Ethics Scale and the intergenerational subscales of the Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire were moderate, with the exception of Intergenerational Intimidation and Intergenerational Triangulation. The low correlations between vertical scales and Intergenerational Intimidation, Intergenerational Triangulation, and Personal Authority suggest that these subscales measure different phenomena. The correlation of Vertical Trust and Justice with Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy indicates that trust and justice are key relational components in the family. This relationship would be expected. Vertical Entitlement was similarly related to Intergenerational Fusion/Individuation and Intergenerational Intimacy. Vertical Entitlement relates to receiving deserved merit from one's family, so the relationship of these subscales would also be expected. The modest correlation of Vertical Loyalty to Intergenerational Intimacy would indicate that loyalty has a slight relation to family closeness.

It should be noted that Vertical Entitlement correlated to Spousal Intimacy and Spousal Fusion/Individuation at a stronger level. This indicates that receiving deserved merit from one's family is connected to one's spousal relationship. This connection of entitlement to later horizontal relationships is cited in much of the contextual literature (e.g., Boszormenyi-Nagy & Ulrich, 1981; Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986). The negative correlation of Vertical Loyalty to Spousal Fusion/Individuation suggests that as an individual is more fused with or individuated from their spouse, there is a corresponding high or low degree of loyalty to the family of origin. This connection is also noted by Boszormenyi-Nagy and Spark (1984). Finally, the correlations between the vertical constructs and Nuclear Family Triangulation would indicate that there is some relation between individuals' relationships with their families of origin and their children. Boszormenyi-Nagy (1986) indicates that these family-of-origin relationships have a dynamic effect on later relationships with children.

Correlations between horizontal subscales of the Relational Ethics Scale and the spousal subscales of the Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire were

Table 5
Correlations of the Relational Ethics Scale, Dyadic Adjustment Scale and the Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire*

Scale	RES Total	Relational Ethics Scale							
		Vertical Total	Horizontal Total	Vertical Trust/Justice	Vertical Entitlement	Vertical Loyalty	Horizontal Trust/Justice	Horizontal Entitlement	Horizontal Loyalty
<i>Personal Authority in the Family System Questionnaire</i>									
Spousal Intimacy	.71	.56	.93	.26	.69	-.01	.94	.31	.80
Spousal Fusion/ Individuation	.33	.19	.57	.21	.50	-.52	.54	.16	.38
Nuclear Family Triangulation	.64	.49	.75	.34	.56	.07	.72	.41	.65
Intergeneration Intimidation	.23	.05	.24	.23	.32	-.12	.26	.28	.10
Intergeneration Fusion/Individ.	.36	.34	.38	.44	.49	-.18	.36	.60	.28
Intergeneration Intimacy	.41	.46	.18	.42	.45	.35	.22	.10	.34
Intergeneration Triangulation	-.07	-.17	.22	-.33	-.20	.23	.11	.03	.17
Personal Authority	.03	.05	-.03	.05	.14	-.08	-.02	.30	.21
<i>Dyadic Adjustment Scale</i>									
Dyadic Consensus	.61	.11	.64	.15	.39	-.44	.62	.29	.55
Dyadic Satisfaction	.66	.52	.86	.25	.41	.01	.85	.26	.79
Dyadic Cohesion	.72	.50	.81	.11	.68	.24	.85	.01	.76
Affectional Expression	.51	.31	.87	.17	.55	-.26	.88	.21	.80
DAS Total	.61	.42	.93	.24	.61	-.12	.92	.29	.85

*N = 36. All correlations > .31 are significant at the .05 level.

moderate to high. Since the subscales measure aspects of spousal relationships and all subjects were married, the level of correlation would be expected.

The horizontal subscales, with the exception of Horizontal Entitlement, correlated with the subscales of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale at the expected high level. The low correlation of Horizontal Entitlement suggests that this subscale is not related to dyadic adjustment. Again, the moderate correlations of the Vertical Entitlement subscale to all the subscales of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale indicate that receiving deserved merit from one's family is connected to one's spousal relationship.

DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the data from the initial sample of 290 subjects, the statements in the Relational Ethics Scale have significant item validity. Statements discriminated at a significant level between subjects with total scores in the top quartile and subjects with total scores in the bottom quartile. Data from this sample also revealed that the Relational Ethics Scale has significant construct validity. Reliability for the total scale as well as for the sets of vertical and horizontal statements is in the high range for internal consistency (Aiken, 1979).

The *t*-tests performed in stage four indicate that the Relational Ethics Scale has a high degree of predictive validity. Concurrent validity tests performed in stage five suggest that the Relational Ethics Scale correlates with scales measuring related constructs, but measures additional phenomena.

It is obvious that the items that most clearly discriminated and that had the highest factor loadings were the items associated with the construct of trust and justice. There is substantial reason to believe that this construct is not only the most essential in the dimension of relational ethics (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Krasner, 1986), but may also be the basis on which all other relational ethics constructs operate. Trust may simply be the process of relational justice repeated over a period of time. The importance of trust and justice in relationships seems to be further validated by the fact that the two constructs consistently loaded together in the study. Constructs such as loyalty and entitlement may be the actions or the observable demonstrations of relational justice or trust.

The horizontal aspect of relational ethics is less well defined in the literature. Although Van Heusden and Van Den Eerenbeemt (1987) expound more on the relational ethics in horizontal relationships, vertical relationships are still the clearest realm of relational ethics. This was evidenced in that the panel of experts eliminated all but three of the statements written to reflect horizontal loyalty. This confusion about horizontal relationships probably contributed to the preference in the expert rating for horizontal entitlement statements which reflected destructive entitlement.

Uses of the Scale and Future Research

The strength of the trust and justice constructs in both vertical and horizontal relationship statements to discriminate between the dysfunctional and well-adjusted groups indicates that the emotional turmoil of individuals may well be rooted in these factors, as Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1980) have stated. Also, the high correlations of the Relational Ethics Scale, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, and the Spousal Intimacy and Intergenerational Intimacy subscales of the Personal Authority in the Family System questionnaire indicate that the Relational Ethics Scale is valid in determining relational closeness and adjustment. This indicates that the Relational Ethics Scale may be particularly useful to contextual therapists in the assessment of a family or individual. Since constructs of the relational ethics dimension have been

validated, the Relational Ethics Scale may also be useful as an empirical research tool in supporting the effectiveness of the contextual family therapy approach.

One of the continuing problems with any attempt to measure the relational ethics dimension is the complexity of the concept. The dimension encompasses both subjective and objective information as well as intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives. It is reasonable to expect, however, that as the relational ethics dimension is more clearly articulated in the literature, the individual scores from the Relational Ethics Scale could be utilized in determining some interpersonal family score. It is also important to note that other substantial constructs may exist in the relational ethics dimension, such as responsibility and reciprocity. The Relational Ethics Scale, therefore, is meant to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive in determining the status of this dimension. Additional research is needed to provide further validity and develop additional constructs.

More research is also needed to determine whether variables such as ethnicity, marital status, health, and economic status effect scores on the scale. Gender identity and gender role are particularly important variables to examine with regard to any concept involving trust, justice, entitlement, and loyalty. Finally, additional testing with clinical and nonclinical populations needs to be performed in order to provide more specific meaning to scale scores.

REFERENCES

- Aiken, L. (1979). *Psychological testing assessment*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (1981). Contextual therapy: Therapeutic leverages in mobilizing trust. In R. Green & J. L. Framo (Eds.), *Family therapy: Major contributions* (pp. 393–415). New York: International Universities Press.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (1986). Transgenerational solidarity: The expanding context of therapy and prevention. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, *14*, 195–212.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I. (1987). The context of consequences and the limits of therapeutic responsibility. In H. Stierlin, F. B. Simon, & G. Schmidt (Eds.), *Familiar realities: The Heidelberg conference* (pp. 41–51). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Krasner, B. R. (1980). Trust-based therapy: A contextual approach. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *137*, 767–775.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Krasner, B. R. (1986). *Between give and take: A clinical guide to contextual therapy*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Spark, G. M. (1984). *Invisible loyalties*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, I., & Ulrich, D. N. (1981). Contextual family therapy. In A. S. Gurman & D. P. Kniskern (Eds.), *Handbook of family therapy* (pp. 159–186). New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- Bray, J. H., Williamson, D. S., & Malone, P. (1984). Personal authority in the family system: Development of a questionnaire to measure personal authority in intergenerational family processes. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *10*, 167–178.
- Buber, M. (1958). *I and thou*. New York: Charles Scribner and Sons.
- Kaslow, F. W. (1987). Marital and family therapy. In M. B. Sussman & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and the family* (pp. 835–859). New York: Plenum Press.
- Kolevzon, M. S., & Green, R. G. (1985). *Family therapy models*. New York: Springer.
- Spanier, G. B. (1976). Measuring dyadic adjustment: New scales for assessing the quality of marriage and similar dyads. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *7*, 441–452.
- Van Heusden, A., & Van Den Eerenbeemt. (1987). *Balance in motion*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.