Procedures Manual
Parent-Adolescent Stressor Discussion Coding

Adapted from:
Overview of observational procedures and coding manual for NIMH project R01 MH 073590 “Co-rumination and adjustment: A Multimethod Assessment”
Peer Relations Lab, University of Missouri-Columbia
Provided by Amanda Rose
Appendix C: Co-rumination Coding Manual

**Step 1: Transcribing**

The observational video segments include 4 interactions: a warm-up “Jenga” task, two stressor-discussion tasks (one about mom’s stressor, one about adolescent’s stressor), and the “plan-a-vacation” mood restoration task. For the present study, we will be transcribing and coding only the stressor discussion tasks.

The table below lists the transcription symbols used and was adopted from West and Zimmerman (1985). After the segments are transcribed, they are to be checked for accuracy by a 2nd transcriber.

Each stressor-talk task lasts 6 minutes. To slow down playback speed, cnt+shirt+s seems to work on windows media player.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription language/symbol</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brackets</strong></td>
<td>But really, [I don’t know] that. [What?]</td>
<td>Words in brackets are spoken at the same time. Brackets should be lined up as indicated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repeated Colon</strong></td>
<td>We:::ll, I don’t care.</td>
<td>Colons indicate that the syllable that immediately precedes the colons is extended, or drawn out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hyphen</strong></td>
<td>But wait—</td>
<td>A hyphen indicates that a person’s speech was cut short and that the next speaker interrupted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underscoring</strong></td>
<td>I can’t stand her.</td>
<td>Underscored words are emphasized more heavily than normal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equal signs</strong></td>
<td>‘Swat I said= =No you didn’t.</td>
<td>Equal signs mean that the first speaker finished his or her thought, but that there was no time in between his or her speech and the next line, spoken by his or her partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pause indicators: Numbers or words in parentheses</strong></td>
<td>(35) (pause) *sometimes, transcribers have written things like, “ten second pause” in parentheses, and that’s *Pauses get their own line of the transcript.</td>
<td>Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of seconds for a pause greater than 30 seconds. If less than 30 seconds, the word pause, italicized, in parentheses is sufficient.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix C: Co-rumination Coding Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inaudible utterances</th>
<th>(inaudible)</th>
<th>This indicates that the subject said something, but neither the transcriber nor the checker could figure out what he or she said.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Double parentheses—</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives for speech; descriptions of actions; non-verbal behaviors; laughter</td>
<td>((sings)), ((mockingly)), etc.</td>
<td>Words in double parentheses explain how something was said or explains an action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((stands and stretches))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((rolls eyes)) ((coughs))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((laughs)) ((both laugh))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuttering</td>
<td>I (x) did.</td>
<td>One x indicates the preceding word was repeated once. Stuttering can also be indicated by just writing out the word again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I, I did.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I—I did.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He, he, he went away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He, he—he went away.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Wow! --excitedly</td>
<td>Punctuation is used to indicate intonation and feeling, not necessarily grammar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Really?! --incredulously</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seriously? --questioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Thought-Unit Coding

Conversations are broken into thought-unit phrases. Then, each thought-unit will be coded, as described in the following pages.

A: Identifying Thought Units

Thought units are utterances that comprise a single unit of thought. A thought unit has been defined as “one expressed idea or fragment” and a thought unit can be “one utterance or several...and either a phrase or a sentence” (Gottman, 1983, p. 9; also see Gottman, 1997). It is important to keep in mind that thought units are not necessarily grammatical sentences. Thought units can be incomplete sentences but make up a single thought. The beginning point and ending point of a thought unit are defined by the speaker’s intonation, NOT by ordinary grammar/sentence structure. Thought units are denoted by pauses, a change or shift of idea or thought, or another speaker’s turn (Leaper, 1991; Strough & Berg, 2000).

Note: Thought units are denoted with { }. Nonverbals are denoted with (( )).

Some examples:
{Well you know} {sometimes she’s just (pause) like a little annoying.}
{Yeah I thought about that.} {Man,} {I need to get a job!} {Like now.}
{Yeah.} {We should probably have like some snacks or something} {I mean,} {you know,} {we gotta feed people!}

Important things to note:

A) All verbal utterances are coded as a thought unit. This includes, for example, singing and humming.
Ex: {This puzzle is hard.} {La la la la hmmm hmmm hmmm.}

Laughing is not coded as a thought unit.

B) Nonverbals are coded as a thought unit if they contribute important meaning to what is being said, or if they are used in place of a verbal response.
Ex: A: {Do you like him?}
   B: {((nods))}
   A: {I thought so.}

Otherwise, nonverbals are NOT coded as thought units.
Ex:   A: {I’m not sure what I’m doin tomorrow}
   B: {((plays with notecard on table))}
   A: {I’ll probly go over to John’s house.}

C) Stuttering/repeating words are coded as the same thought unit when spoken together.
Ex: {I was I was like so surprised by that.}
    {I (x) I was like so surprised by that.}
Stuttering/repeating words are coded as separate thought units when there is a clear break in speech.
Ex: {I just} (pause) ((sighs)) {I just don’t know.}

Stuttering speech that is stopped short and changes meaning/conversational direction is coded as separate thought units.
Ex: {I was- } {he was like so surprised by that.}

D) Inaudibles may be included in a thought unit with other words if it is clear from the speaker’s intonation that the inaudible “went with” the other words. However, inaudibles may be coded as separate thought units if part or all of the speaker’s turn is inaudible and intonation also is unclear.
Ex: A: {I told him I didn’t think that (inaudible) is a good idea.}
    B: {I don’t know} {((inaudible))} {maybe he will}

E) Speech that is quoting another person is coded as a single thought unit.
Exs:
{She was like, why don’t you just tell him}

{Remember that movie?} {That one guy goes, “I lost my leg! Lost it in battle!”}

Important things to note:

When coding problem talk, keep in mind that dyads may bring up multiple problems during the task, which can be coded as problem statements even if they differ from the particular stressor introduced at the start of the task.

Statements related to the participants being at the study are NOT coded as problem statements. For example, statements such as “I’m cold/tired/bored/hungry” are not coded as problem statements. If participants make these statements in reference to a problem outside the study context (e.g., they say they are hungry or cold due to insufficient resources at home, or they say they are tired because they stayed up all night studying), then the statement counts as a problem statement. However, if the statement is made in reference to participating in the study, it does not count as a problem statement.
Step 3: Coding Co-rumination and Non-co-rumination

A: Coding Co-ruminative Problem Statements

Co-rumination is defined as talking extensively about problems with a relationship partner and is characterized by a) a large amount of time spent talking about problems, b) mutual encouragement of problem talk, c) rehashing problems, d) speculating about problems, and e) dwelling on negative affect (Rose, 2002).

The following five aspects of co-rumination are coded using the following 5-point Likert scale:

1: Not at all / very little
2: A little
3: A moderate amount
4: A lot
5: Very much

1) Mutual encouragement of problem talk: One or both members of the dyad keeps the problem talk going instead of talking about other issues. One or both may also try to the other to talk about the problem again after the topic has been switched. One may restate the problem throughout the conversation after the problem was initially stated.
   Alice: We have been talking about this forever! Oh well, it’s okay.
   Jane: I know; it’s important. So what happened with [the problem] yesterday?

2) Rehashing problems: One or both members of the dyad talks about the problems or parts of the problems over and over again.
   Daniel: I mean I know I’ve said this already, but she freaking stole his wallet!!
   Josh: Right, dude. She freaking stole it. And remember how she said she didn’t do it?

3) Speculating about problems: One or both members of the dyad ponders the origins of the problem or parts of the problem, why people did what they did, what may happen as a result, etc.
   Jennifer: Why do you think he did that? He can’t be that mean.
   Sarah: I don’t know. I mean, maybe he was having a bad day?

4) Dwelling on negative affect: One or both members of the dyad focuses on the experience of negative emotions like feeling worried, nervous, irritated, sad, anxious, angry, depressed, low, scared, distressed, anguished, shameful, embarrassed, frustrated, etc. Adolescents and some adults may not use affective or emotional terminology, but are clearly focused on the negative affect surrounding the stressor.
   Bill: It sucks man. It really sucks.
   Henry: Seriously. You must feel like crap.

*5) Shared problem talk: Relating to the presenter’s problem with one’s own problem, still focused on the negative aspects. This does not include stating a different problem that is completely unrelated to the speaker’s problem.
   Alice: “I got a parking ticket and have to pay a $50 fine!”
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Jane: “I know what you mean, I got a ticket on Main Street last year, I was really upset when that happened.”

*Shared problem talk was added to the original manual for the purposes of the present study. This rating is similar to mutual encouragement and rehashing, but the existing definitions of mutual encouragement and rehashing did not fully represent the inclusion of problem-focused statements in which one member is relating to the other member’s problem with a similar problem, as described above.

Additional Notes

Similar to other interpersonal processes (e.g., conflict or support), co-rumination is best conceptualized as occurring along a continuum. That is, conversations cannot simply be labeled as “co-rumination” or “not co-rumination.” Instead conversations vary in the degree to which they involve the different aspects of co-rumination:

Some conversations involving problems may not involve co-rumination. For example, a youth may tell a friend that he is free on Friday night because his girlfriend broke up with him, and then the friends begin to make plans for Friday without discussing the break up further. (low co-rumination score)

On the other hand, a youth might tell her friend that she is free on Friday because her boyfriend broke up with her, and, in this case, the friend prompts the youth with questions, the girls rehash details of the break up, speculate about the causes and social repercussions of the break up, and talk a lot about how bad the youth feels. (high co-rumination score)

Furthermore, it is possible for a conversation to involve some co-rumination (a moderate amount) but not as much as the extreme example. For instance, the conversation might involve some aspects of co-rumination (e.g., speculating) but not others (e.g., dwelling on negative feelings) or involve all aspects of co-rumination at a lower intensity than in the extreme example.

A moderate score for particular aspects of co-rumination may be obtained in one of two ways. For example, one youth may exhibit a large amount (e.g., a “4” or “5”) of one aspect while the other youth exhibits a small amount (a “1” or “2”). In this case a moderate score of “3” may be given for the dyad on that particular aspect. Alternatively, both youth may exhibit moderate amounts of a particular aspect. In this case, the dyad may also score a “3” for that particular aspect.
**B: Coding Non-Co-ruminative Problem Statements**

The following four aspects of non-co-rumination are coded using the following 5-point Likert scale:

1: Not at all / very little
2: A little
3: A moderate amount
4: A lot
5: Very much

1) Problem solving/advice giving: One or both members of the dyad offers a solution to the problem, or asks the other what ideas they may have for actively solving the problem at hand. These comments may validate the speaker’s problem, but ultimately are problem-solving focused.

   Alice: You should try to study more to do better on the next exam.
   or
   Jane: I understand why you are frustrated, but is there anything else you can do to improve your grade in the class?

2) Statement of the problem or questioning to understand the problem: One or both members of the dyad states the problem, or either asks or explains the factual details of the problem.

   Jennifer: You failed English?
   Sarah: No I just failed the project, so I got a bad grade but did not fail the whole class.
   Jennifer: Ok, what grade did you earn for the class?
   Sarah: I’ll probably get a C+.

3) Distraction/topic changing: One or both members of the dyad changes the subject away from the speaker’s problem.

   Daniel: I mean I know I’ve said this already, but she freaking stole his wallet!!
   Josh: Did I tell you that I’m going on vacation next week?

4) Positive or encouraging comments about the outcome: One or both members of the dyad give a hopeful or wishful comment regarding the speaker’s stressor.

   Daniel: I’m not sure I’ll make the team this year since I screwed up in try-outs.
   Josh: I’m sure it will all work out.

**For the purpose of understanding what co-rumination is, it was important for our research group to agree on a definition of what co-rumination is not. Many conceptual questions were raised. As a result, we developed a set of subcategories to describe problem talk that does not fit with the definition of co-rumination. Although global scores were not assigned for the use of the present study, we found this to be a helpful tool in training and building agreement within our group. Non-co-ruminative problem talk was defined according to the following categories: problem solving or giving advice, stating the problem or questioning to understand the problem, distraction or changing the topic, giving a positive or encouraging comment about the outcome of the problem. Each subcategory is explained and demonstrated by examples below.**
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Assigning Scores

Dyads will receive one overall co-rumination score for each discussion task:

A: After reading the transcript and watching the interaction, coders assign the following co-rumination ratings to describe to what extent the dyads engaged in co-ruminative problem-talk:

I: Co-rumination:

1: Not at all / very little
2: A little
3: A moderate amount
4: A lot
5: Very much

Global co-rumination: _________