

MILLER ASSESSMENT CODING SYSTEM

Manual for Rating Levels of Emotional Development

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The Miller Assessment Coding System (MACS) specifies a procedure for rating levels of emotional development from open-ended responses to the Definition Response Instrument (Gage, Morse, and Piechowski, 1981). It was designed to be objective, systematic, and theoretically relevant. The coding categories were derived from the dynamisms and descriptions of levels in Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (Dabrowski, 1977).

Motivation was the classification principle on which the coding system was based. Motivation has been described as "the springs of action" (Lange and James, 1922) and more recently as "the inner motor" (M. M. Piechowski, personal communication, March 16, 1985). Motives are the conceptions, attitudes, values, and feelings we hold toward ourselves and the world; they function to arouse, maintain, and channel behavior. At each developmental level, a person's motivation is entirely different.

The MACS has three major categories: (1) values, (2) self, and (3) others. There are five subcategories that represent the five levels of development. The manual provides definitions for each general category and its specific subcategories. Definitions include dynamisms, shown in parentheses (Dabrowski and Piechowski, 1977), and value orientations, in square brackets (Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey 1960). Indicators from actual data are used as examples.

CATEGORY CODING SYSTEM DIAGRAM

Values	Self	Others
Self-Serving	Egocentricity	Superficial
Stereotypical	Ambivalence	Adaptive
Individual	Inner Conflict	Interdependent
Universal	Self-Direction	Democratic
Transcendent	Inner Peace & Harmony	Communionistic

CATEGORY DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

VALUES

Values are reflected in statements about the desirability or the importance of certain attributes or issues. Acts, customs, or institutions regarded in a favorable or unfavorable way also reflect values. Life goals are another example of values.

LEVEL I. SELF-SERVING—Values mainly furthering one's own interest. Two primary values are the pursuit of wealth or material possessions [**Economic**] and the desire to gain and exercise power and control [**Political**]. Success or winning may be considered important. External rather than internal qualities are valued. A lack of depth in regard to values is characteristic.

Example: Maybe this has nothing to do with an “ideal self”, but with one of the attributes that I would like to have. That is, being a *leader* or have the capacity or ability to move the people. I think I can get along with almost everybody. I do not have a problem with too many people. But I do not have the ability to make them *follow* me. Maybe I can control them, but not as I would like to. I do not feel that I have this power. Anyway, it is not something that really makes me sad or bothers me. I know I don't have it, but I would like to (even though it might cause a lot of problems).

LEVEL II. STEREOTYPICAL—Values held by one's own family or community that represent fixed or conventional patterns. These values are internalized from external sources such as parents, church, government, or the media. The values taken from external sources may reflect moral concerns or standards of good behavior but are not internally evaluated. Values are seen as relative; that is, based on one's own situation.

Life is regarded as a procession of events; each single impression enjoyed for its own sake [**Aesthetic**].

Example: I also worry whether or not the career path I have chosen will ever bring me the happiness I desire. I want to work and have a full, successful career, but I also want to have a family and spend lots of time raising my children. I feel as if I will have to give up something and if it happens to be my career then I am just wasting time in graduate school.

LEVEL III. INDIVIDUAL—Values based on self-evaluated standards begin to form a hierarchy of aims. By becoming aware of different levels of concerns in all aspects of life i.e. social conformity versus social responsibility (**Hierarchization**), the individual begins to sort out higher and lower levels of experiences. Respondents at this level are independent thinkers and are involved in the issues and interpretations of life.

There is a search for truth, especially to gain knowledge and understanding of one's self and others [**Theoretical**]. There is concern with morality and the standards of right versus wrong conduct based on internal criteria. Justice, integrity, and moral judgment are valued but not carried out consistently.

Example: (1) I find myself willing and able to stand-up for what I believe is right and just. But I am tempted to back down from my position if others oppose my viewpoint. It is a struggle to continue to act on principle and not "join the crowd." I apparently still have a need not to be different.

(2) The question of unwanted births versus abortions is one which I cannot completely resolve in my own moral framework. I so value the life of a child, but know how fragile that life and being is in the hands of someone not committed to even adequate parenting of a child.

LEVEL IV. UNIVERSAL—Universally agreed upon values, such as honesty, equality, freedom, and justice. One's values at this level are based on independent convictions. An autonomously evaluated hierarchy of values is organized and well developed (**Third Factor**). High ethical and moral standards become the guiding principles of one's life.

Love is seen as the essential ingredient in human inter-relatedness. There is altruism or unselfish concern for the welfare of others [**Social**].

Example: (1) All of my conscious life—I have sought out wisdom. Ever since I was a very young child, I have wanted to be wise more than anything. I have sought out sound judgment and actively attempted to learn fair, honest and wise dealing –within myself and in the outer world.

(2) I remember having stated before that "to live impeccably" was essentially the motto of my life. Well this statement has now developed into:

TO LIVE IMPECCABLY
TO PRACTICE HARMLESSNESS
TO SERVE HUMANITY

LEVEL V. TRANSCENDENT—Universal values surpass the material realm and involve the spiritual life. There is concern for the unity of the cosmos as a whole and the individual's relationship to this totality [**Religious**]. The individual's goal is to achieve perfection in moral judgment and practice (**Personality Ideal**).

Example: [Ideal Self] To have wisdom and understanding, not merely knowledge. To be wise enough to know what can be accomplished and how and when. To have the eternal (rather than temporal) perspective.

SELF

Self-feelings are expressed in statements that evaluate one's own behavior, actions, choices, and desires.

LEVEL I. EGOCENTRICITY—Self-centered feelings and concern with self-preservation. Self-centered concerns are primarily about external aspects such as appearance. There is no intra-personal conflict; all conflict is externalized. There is very limited introspection or reflection on one's own behavior. Instead there may be fears of being caught, found out, outsmarted, betrayed, deceived or ridiculed.

Example: (1) [Things on which you reflect] Changing my appearance, attitude, and behavior. Such as being a little more feminine in my walk or putting on make-up. Mainly things that affect my external appearance.

(2) [Frustration] Any situation in which I view myself as a loser. If I can extend the game without losing; regroup, even reevaluate my goal then re-enter the field for another try, it is much superior for me than to confront, lose and accept the consequences.

LEVEL II. AMBIVALENCE—Mixed feelings toward self. There are opposing views of self due to lack of inner direction (**Ambivalence**). Self-doubt is frequently expressed based on the evaluations of others, and a strong, personal need for approval and acceptance is evident. There seems to be a search for affection and respect.

There is reflection and questioning of one's own behavior without evaluation of higher and lower experiences. Self-analysis or counseling may be sought for the purpose of dealing with various aspects of one's behavior, i.e. overeating, compulsive behavior. Insecurity, inadequacy, and vulnerability are characteristic.

The evaluations of others are especially important to one's self-feeling. However, feelings of inferiority often arise as a result of comparison with others.

Example: (1) I usually wonder whether or not I will ever find a man that wants to marry me and that I want to marry. I feel sometimes as if I am not attractive enough and am too aggressive and stubborn to keep a man. It is terribly frustrating to care for someone yet not be able to make him happy or satisfied. I wonder if I am picky and demanding and if I should ease my standards. In that way I would at least have someone rather than be alone. But I also wonder if I wouldn't be better off alone.

(2) Concern over what others think of me has often been a channel through which I've sought support. I've often concerned myself with what the strong, social-justice oriented people in my community thought of me. I usually come up feeling inadequate. I can't and deep down don't want to do what they do, yet somehow I feel "not as good as" they are.

LEVEL III. INNER CONFLICT—Internal conflict resulting from self-evaluation based on emerging personal standards. This conflict may take various forms, such as (1) disappointment because one did not take the opportunity to put one's principles into action (**Inferiority toward Oneself**); (2) discontent and anger with one's attitudes and behavior (**Dissatisfaction with Oneself**); (3) a sense of wonder, surprise, and even shock at one's reactions in situations (**Disquietude and Astonishment with Oneself**). Not all reactions are negative. Surprise or even joy in self-discovery may be expressed. (4) distress and embarrassment over what one sees as personality deficiencies (**Shame**); and (5) anguish about moral failures (**Guilt**).

Example: Shit, I feel that way a lot lately [inadequate, unworthy, not good enough]. What seems lacking though aren't so much specific skills, talents as much as inability to function as I think I should. If I can't be responsive to others, can't be caring, able to do--when I become so focused in, on me and my frustrations--I feel worthless. I can't believe people will want to stay around me. I feel disgusted with me and expect others to also. I experience myself from this state as harmful to others (in my lack of response) and feel that they should get away from me or me from them so as not to hurt.

LEVEL IV. SELF-DIRECTION—Self-conscious, self-determined development. Respondents at this level are aware of their own uniqueness and developmental needs (**Self-Awareness**). There is genuine self-acceptance. Comparisons are with their own ideal not the norm. Personal growth is self-directed and based on universal principles of morality (**Self-Education and Therapy**). Self-reflection and self-discipline (**Self-Control**) are a necessary part of their self-directed development.

Desirable traits are fostered in the personality and undesirable traits are eliminated (**Inner Psychic Transformation**). Critical self-evaluation occurs continually for the purpose of self-knowledge, understanding, and continued growth (**Subject-Object in Oneself**).

Example: I try to reflect upon my life daily. I find it helps me put values and feelings into perspective. I look at my prayer life for that day, what did I pray about, how intense was my praying--what kind of quality was it. I think about my family, what part of my day did they affect today? How much was I like my sister (who I admire for her kindness and gentle spirit) or how much was I like my

one brother (who I know I am like, he is very hotheaded and direct). I reflect upon the people I worked with today, how were they feeling, was anyone not doing too well, and did I try to make their load easier?

LEVEL V. INNER PEACE AND HARMONY—An intuitive synthesis of development. The respondent expresses confidence in the direction of his or her development and its universality in all aspects of personality (**Authenticity**). Peace and harmony are achieved by independence from egocentric drives and social pressures; self-choice leads to a feeling of individual freedom. Satisfaction with life for these individuals depends on achieving inner-perfection (**Autonomy**). Inner peace and harmony comes from living one's ideals (**Responsibility for Oneself**).

Example: My "ideal self" is a multifaceted self with only positive attributes. It is an intelligent, compassionate self, concerned with helping others as well as developing its own talents and abilities. My ideal self is strong, indestructible (not immortal, just indestructible), gentle, generous, loving, wise, charming, tolerant, flexible, and happy. It is also creative and productive, has a good sense of humor and a great deal of integrity, and shows consideration for other peoples' feelings. This self is honest, straightforward, and uncompromising in basic moral values. This self is also secure and self-confident and evolving toward perfection, getting better all the time. I don't want to be selfless, just as unselfish as I can without wearing away my own self. I believe that I have some choice in my life, and am willing to accept responsibility for my own actions. I also have control over my own life and realize that, to a great extent, things are the way I make them be. And, in the end, I would like to be able to say, as Leonard Cohen, that "Like a bird on a wire...I have tried, in my way, to be free."

OTHERS

Relationships with others may be expressed with regard to specific other people or groups of people. These expressions often include a description of the nature of the relationship.

LEVEL I. SUPERFICIAL—Shallow relationships with little or no consideration of others. Most relationships occur impulsively or by chance. Other people are used for one's own purposes and are frequently manipulated or exploited. Feelings of commonality are engendered by group activities or belonging to a team, family, or ethnic group (**Syntony**). Feelings towards others can be highly competitive. Possessiveness toward loved ones and jealousy toward rivals is characteristic. Individuals may be suspicious, mistrusting, or resentful of others.

Example: The last four years up to the last six months I've been frustrated with no woman willing to spend more than a month or two with me. I'm crazy about

my girlfriend right now and she's given no sign of going away. We've been together 6 months and she was relaxed. I told her that she's a real basic person, simple, very loving, very direct--no guile about her. Our worlds are very different, she's a great lay.

LEVEL II. ADAPTIVE—Traditional relationships. Feelings toward others are guided by social expectations and peer pressure (**Second Factor**). The desire to please and to get along well with others is expressed. Opposing feelings may be experienced intensely such as love and hate toward the same person at various times. There may be uncertainty with regard to others and changeability in relationships.

Example: I could tackle issues with my husband about religion except that I fear the rift it would create. So the issue lies unspoken. I could do that at work about diagnoses and treatment, but that isn't the norm. Likewise, I could do it within myself, but. . .

LEVEL III. INTERDEPENDENT—Selective and personal involvements. Relationships are characterized by mutual respect and reciprocity. A desire to know and understand others leads to more depth in relationships (**Identification**). A high tolerance for ambiguity in relationships exists.

Significant relationships bring feelings of joy, and a sense of closeness to others besides one's intimate friends and loved ones may be felt (**Empathy**). Desire to serve others increases.

Example: (1) In my relationships with others, I hope always to be gentle, capable of tenderly loving those close to me and always open to the love they wish to give to me.

(2) [Desirable attributes] Clarity is one. I would like to be consistently supportive, especially of my wife and daughter. I would like to balance my love of learning with expressed concern for persons. I would like to attain a spiritual depth and composure (as well as restlessness) which allowed me to share meaningful advice but informed me to let people assimilate what they wanted. I would like to be positive and influential in people's lives, credible, and respected.

LEVEL IV. DEMOCRATIC—Enduring bonds of friendship and love with a small circle of friends. Others are accepted as unique individuals, and one is uncritical and undemanding. Sincere and straightforward communication is characteristic.

Empathy toward others involves emotional sharing as well as deep understanding of the experiences of others (**Empathy**). Compassion for others is frequently expressed.

Example: I think the quality of compassion is best for an ideal life. The ability to suffer with another, to understand their perspective, while honestly naming my own seems essential to building a good life. I see this attribute only being born of listening, love, a gentle yet firm discipline, an ability to wait, a curbing of untamed reactions yet requiring that one feel strongly with others. Such compassion remembers joy and sadness in a way that helps a person connect with others rather than standing in isolation from them. At the same time such compassion can only be born out of quiet reflection and a willingness to undergo disorientation from my way of seeing things and doing things. It is then that I can begin to learn of others ways of seeing and doing. I strongly believe that a deepening of compassion among people would go a long way toward uncovering a more "ideal" world.

LEVEL V. COMMUNIONISTIC—Intimate, spiritual relationships. Universal love is attained, and one has empathy for all living things. Responsibility for others is accepted, and there is a willingness to serve and sacrifice for the sake of others.

Example: To have love--not merely a feeling but the love that is a deep healing compassion--that reaches people and touches them and draws them into the bond of the eternal family; and opens the way in them to wholeness.

PROCEDURES FOR CODING

Each paragraph is rated separately. The theme is the unit of text to be coded, and the paragraph is the amount of surrounding text that may be used in interpreting the theme. The coder reads the first paragraph looking for a theme which reflects one of the three categories: (1) feelings toward values, (2) feelings toward self, or (3) feelings toward others. When a theme related to one of the categories is found, the coder then decides which of the five subcategories it belongs to.

To record a theme, put a p1 on the rating sheet under the subcategory to which it relates. If another theme is found in the same paragraph, code it under the appropriate category and continue until all themes in the paragraph have been identified and recorded. Follow the same procedure for each paragraph of the response using the notation p1 to indicate themes in the first paragraph, p2 for themes in the second paragraph, and so on throughout the response. Only the manifest or surface content may be rated (Holsti 1969).

The question which elicited the response and other paragraphs in a response are not used for interpretation of the theme *unless* the answer cannot be understood without this additional information.

REFERENCES

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- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
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DEFINITION RESPONSE INSTRUMENT

(Each question is presented at the top of a separate sheet of paper. Respondents are asked to spend as much time as needed to complete the questions and use the back of the paper if necessary.)

1. Please describe times when you are strongly affected by what others think of you or times when you have compared yourself in some way to others.
2. Please describe those questions which cause strong doubts within you, that frustrate you, and perhaps result in anxiety or depression. The problems should involve struggles which are internal (for example, philosophical, sexual, emotional), not struggles which are primarily external (for example, a purely economic problem).
3. Describe times when you feel inadequate, unworthy, not good enough or frustrated with what may be lacking in yourself (abilities, skills, talents, personal qualities, etc.).
4. Describe those situations which cause you to feel frustration or anger toward yourself. Such feelings may stem from something you did and later regretted, as well as something you feel you should have done, but did not do. Likewise, you may be angry with yourself for having felt a certain way or having believed something you no longer feel is true.
5. Think of times when you try to stand back and look at yourself objectively. Upon what specific things do you reflect? Please elaborate.
6. Think of your "ideal self" and those qualities that you think are best for an ideal life. What attributes do you most dream of having?

Coding Form: Questionnaire # _____ Coder: _____

<u>Values</u>	<u>Self</u>	<u>Others</u>
Self-Serving	Egocentricity	Superficial
Q1 _____	_____	_____
Q2 _____	_____	_____
Q3 _____	_____	_____
Q4 _____	_____	_____
Q5 _____	_____	_____
Q6 _____	_____	_____
Stereotypical	Ambivalence	Adaptive
Q1 _____	_____	_____
Q2 _____	_____	_____
Q3 _____	_____	_____
Q4 _____	_____	_____
Q5 _____	_____	_____
Q6 _____	_____	_____
Individual	Inner Conflict	Interdependent
Q1 _____	_____	_____
Q2 _____	_____	_____
Q3 _____	_____	_____
Q4 _____	_____	_____
Q5 _____	_____	_____
Q6 _____	_____	_____
Universal	Self-Direction	Democratic
Q1 _____	_____	_____
Q2 _____	_____	_____
Q3 _____	_____	_____
Q4 _____	_____	_____
Q5 _____	_____	_____
Q6 _____	_____	_____
Transcendent	Inner Peace & Harmony	Communionistic
Q1 _____	_____	_____
Q2 _____	_____	_____
Q3 _____	_____	_____
Q4 _____	_____	_____
Q5 _____	_____	_____
Q6 _____	_____	_____