Interpersonal Conflict in Television Drama

Content Analysis of the Intimate Relationships on "Kotikatu"

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Tiivistelmä - Abstract

The aim of this study is to describe how intimate couples in a Finnish television drama serial *Kotikatu* communicate in conflict situations. This is done by qualitative content analysis of the conflict scenes from twenty videotaped episodes of *Kotikatu*. Theories from interpersonal communication, gender research and mass media research offer the theoretical background for the analysis.

The theoretical background of this study consists of four parts. First, the theory of relational communication is introduced. Then, different approaches to interpersonal conflict and power are examined and the attributions theory of conflict presented. Third, gender research and the idea of gendered communication cultures are introduced. Fourth, the characteristics of television as the context of the study are considered; attention is paid to televisual elements, genres on television and the influence of television programmes on the social reality of viewers.

The first research question is set to find out how couples on *Kotikatu* deal with conflict situations. This is done by, e.g. examining the conflict management strategies applied and the overall development of the conflicts. The second research question concentrates on the relational messages, metacommunication and communication patterns between the characters. The third research question examines the communication of the couples from a gender perspective. It strives to find out what kind of portrayals of male and female conflict behaviour are presented in *Kotikatu*.

The results show that competitive conflict management strategies are the most widely used among the characters, e.g. personal criticism and rationalisation or argumentation are popular ways of dealing with conflicts. Cooperative strategies come in second; disclosure and empathy are often used. Avoidance strategies are quite rarely applied, the most popular avoidance tactic is leaving the conflict scene. The Conflicts in the intimate relationships of *Kotikatu* start because of two general reasons: one partner has hurt the other's feelings or the partners attempt to attain incompatible goals. After a conflict has begun it escalates until it comes to a turning point, which is often provided by a strategy shift. Half of the conflicts are explicitly settled, for example, with an apology.

Regarding control and dominance, the characters tend to behave in a domineering fashion, there is much competitive symmetry in the interaction of the partners. One process of schismogenesis was detected from the research material; this process was also described as demand-withdraw interaction pattern. Male characters resorted to competitive conflict management tactics more often, while females used cooperative strategies more than their male counterparts. Avoidance strategies were almost solely used by men; e.g. leaving was only applied by male characters. In general, the characters demonstrated surprisingly many characteristics of masculine and feminine communication cultures, though also some interesting exceptions to this rule were detected.

Asiasanat television drama, interpersonal conflict, Kotikatu, gender research
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1 INTRODUCTION

This study is about analysing representations of interpersonal conflict on television. The aim of the study is to describe how intimate couples in a Finnish television drama serial *Kotikatu* behave in conflict situations; how they communicate power and dominance, and what kind of conflict management strategies they apply. This study is also set to discover whether there are gender differences in the communication of men and women in *Kotikatu*.

The television serial *Kotikatu* was chosen as the subject of study because of its popularity among Finnish viewers and its inclination to depict relationships in a relatively realistic manner. The serial can offer for scrutiny Finnish relationships spanning three generations. In this study the conflicts of *Kotikatu* are approached through the theoretical framework of interpersonal communication and gender research. This framework offers us tools to describe and analyse the interaction couples in *Kotikatu* engage in. The method to be used is qualitative content analysis. It is applied to analyse the conflict scenes from twenty episodes of *Kotikatu*.

The analysis concentrates on three aspects of the communication between the characters. First, it strives to describe the overall development of the conflict situations in *Kotikatu*, and determine which conflict management strategies the characters use to deal with these situations. The conflict management strategies will show whether the characters have chosen a competitive or cooperative approach, or whether they attempt to avoid the conflict altogether. Second, the analysis will examine the patterns of control and dominance that are present in *Kotikatu*'s conflict scenes. Does one of the partners seek to dominate the situation? Are there recurring communication patterns in arguments the couples have? Third, the behaviour of the characters is examined from a gender perspective. We shall find out what kind of images of male and female communication the conflict scenes of *Kotikatu* present to us. The analysis will also examine how consistent these images are with the findings of gender research about masculine and feminine communication cultures.

The rationale for analysing the communication of fictional television characters rises from media reception research. Today, in the age of secondary orality (Ong 1982),

television, as well as other forms of electronic media, play a part in our conception of selfhood and social reality. Silverstone (1991:151) suggests that television has a capacity to profoundly influence the nature and quality of the life of its users. How this influence occurs has been explained in several ways, two of which are models theory and cultivation analysis. The models theory suggests that media offer us symbolic models of social reality and these models tend to suggest certain kinds of interpretations (Shore 1998:36). In the case of this study, every week nearly a million Finns receive models of behaviour in interpersonal conflicts from *Kotikatu*. These fictional models offer us a suggestion about how Finnish men and women argue, and these suggestions are the subject of this study. However, the models received from television are always interpreted by individual viewers and then merged with other cultural models they possess. The interpretations vary, some viewers may attach a great deal of importance to the actions of the characters and therefore allow influence; for example, their image of the behaviour of Finnish men may be affected. Others may consider the series as only marginally important for the construction of social reality.

According to cultivation analysis, as maintained by Gerbner & Gross (1976), the content of television programmes influence our perception of reality. Television is thought to constantly offer us images of mainstream culture, violence, and conventional gender role behaviour. Viewers make use of the information gathered from television particularly when experiencing situations that are similar to those enacted by television characters, and when there are not many other relevant sources of information available in their memory. This too may apply to conflicts in intimate relationships; we are rarely able to follow closely the conflicts of other couples, with the possible exception of our parents, but images of relationship conflicts are frequently available to us on television. Cultivation analysis has also received a lot of criticism (see Hirsch 1980). Nevertheless it does direct our attention to television content: what kind of images and models of interaction does television cultivate in us?

In order to describe the models of conflict behaviour on *Kotikatu*, this study uses theories of interpersonal communication. These theories are not designed to analyse and explain media content especially since they have been developed on the basis of

real-life behaviour. However, the viewers often relate to television characters as if they were real; we suffer and rejoice with the familiar characters like they were real, we even speculate about their motives and intentions. Especially with a television programme of the social realistic genre, like *Kotikatu*, viewers analyse and judge the characters as if they are "real life" individuals. Therefore, in order to understand the models of behaviour the viewers receive and interpret, the characters and their interaction need to be analysed like real people are analysed. Naturally, one must take into account also the way television and its practices as a medium limit and shape the way people are portrayed. This will be dealt with in chapter five. In a way, television is also an easy medium for studying complex human behaviour, like conflict situations, for example, because it presents the situations in clear packages, scenes, and simplifies communication. Unlike reality, in television drama the correct interpretations are often suggested to the viewer, and the behaviour and thoughts of the characters are easier to understand than when dealing with the disorder of real-life interpersonal conflicts.

The intercultural aspect of this study lies in locating the elements of masculine and feminine communication cultures that come to play when a Finnish television drama depicts conflicts between couples. Wood (1997b, 1998) and Tannen (1986, 1993, 1994) have, among others, written about the significance of the differences that often exist in the thinking and communication of men and women. It is naturally possible that in *Kotikatu* few such aspects are found, and this would mean that other factors, than gender, are portrayed as more relevant in these conflicts. This study appreciates this ambiguity and definitional difficulty that the concepts *masculine* and *feminine* represent (e.g. Spence & Buckner 1995. However, it is necessary to label gendered communication cultures in some manner, and in the absence of better terms, this study will use masculine and feminine to refer to communication that is often considered to be typical for men or women.

The references used in this study are largely American and describe the feature of Anglo-American mainstream culture. Surprisingly, many of the studies dealing with gender (e.g. Cupach and Canary 1995) do not mention which co-cultures of the United States are represented among the subjects. Often the reader is told only that the subjects are university students from a certain American university. This leads

one to assume that the European American population is strongly represented since if the majority of the subjects would have been African American or Hispanic, one would expect this to be told. This being said, it would be surprising if the results matched Finnish television drama perfectly, because the Finnish national culture, within which gender identifications are largely defined, is different from the diversity found in the United States. Applying Anglo-American speech communication research outside the cultural context where it was conducted is generally problematic (Pörhölä, Sallinen & Isotalus 1997:440). On the other hand, it is possible that gender preferential communication may include similar characteristics in most cultures of the Western world.

In this study the term *'intimate relationship'* refers to all couples who are romantically involved regardless of their marital status or sexual preference; this includes couples who are married, dating, engaged or living together. The term *'romantic relationship'* is also used in the literature, but since this study is about conflict situations, which, at leas in *Kotikatu*, are rarely very romantic, the term *intimate* feels more appropriate and is therefore applied.

2 RELATIONAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 The Origins of Relational Communication

Gregory Bateson and his early followers, the Palo Alto Group, developed the theory of relational communication in Palo Alto, California during the 1950s and 1960s. The theory was originally designed to be used in psychiatric contexts. The ideas of this group are most clearly defined in the classic "Pragmatics of Human Communication" (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967) which presents the system principles of the theory of relational communication.

Relational communication places the relationship at the heart of interpersonal communication: interpersonal communication functions to form and define relationships, which in turn affect the nature of communication. This is why this theory is well suited for analysing conflict in intimate relationships; the relationships is what these conflicts are about, also in television drama. Thus, relationships cannot be reduced to the personal characteristics of the partners involved, they are instead created and transformed through interaction. For example, control, trust and intimacy are seen as characteristics of the relationship rather than qualities of the individual. An interpersonal relationship is viewed as being an ongoing psychological and communicative process that is never entirely stable - it always includes an element of change (Werner & Baxter 1994:324-325). This process takes place between people who have their own views of the world and the relationship itself. Communication functions to negotiate these differing ways of constructing the world into a shared system of understanding. Differences between individuals do not disappear with this shared understanding, instead, the partners begin to take account of the other person's view in their mental construction of the relationship. In daily conversations, each partner tries to place themselves and their thinking within the context of the relationship. (Duck & Pittman 1994.) By observing how we do this, relational communication strives to understand the nature of human communication.

The Palo Alto group (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967) introduces five basic axioms that describe the nature of interpersonal communication. In the following these axioms are briefly presented and discussed.

2.2 Two Levels of Communication

The first axiom is well known: "*one cannot not communicate*"; all behaviour that is perceived can be interpreted as communication by others, and consequently may also be responded to (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:48-49). This axiom is widely cited in the communication literature and has also given rise to the debate about what should be counted as communication (see Littlejohn 1996:279; Burgoon 1994). The claim that all behaviour is potential communication leads to the usage of the terms communication and behaviour as virtually synonymous, (Burgoon 1994:230; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson 1967:22) which is the manner in which they are also used in this study.

According to the second axiom every conversation carries two messages, *a report message* and a *command message*. The report message conveys the literary content of the communication while the command message makes a statement about the relationship. This message indicates how the communicators in the context of a certain relationship regard each other, themselves and their relationship. (Bateson 1951:179-181.) Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967:51-54) call these two levels of communication also by the names of *content message* and *relationship message* or *communication* and *metacommunication*. The term metacommunication refers to the relationship message being a communication about communication, it classifies the content message, suggests how to interpret what is being said.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) have further studied metacommunication, for which they utilise the term *relational messages*. By surveying interpersonal communication literature they have found 12 dimensions along which relational communication may occur. These dimensions are: dominance-submission, intimacy, affection-hostility, intensity of involvement, inclusion-exclusion, trust, depth-superficiality, emotional arousal, composure, similarity, formality and task-social orientation. Later Burgoon (1994) outlined four message clusters that combine the previous dimensions: (1) messages of intimacy, (2) arousal and composure, (3) dominance, and (4) formality and task versus social orientation. Among these four the messages of intimacy and dominance are the most interesting for this study.

Based on the notion that relational messages are often communicated nonverbally Burgoon and her colleagues (Burgoon, Buller, Hale & deTurk 1984) have studied five nonverbal cues - eye contact, proximity, body lean, smiling and touch - in connection to relational message dimensions. The study was conducted by letting subjects observe 40 videotaped conversations in which male-female dyads expressed various combinations of nonverbal cues. The results showed that close proximity seemed to communicate greater degrees of (1) intimacy, attraction, trust, and caring; (2) greater immediacy and (3) greater dominance, persuasiveness and aggressiveness. Frequent eye contact expressed the same messages as proximity, but proximity was considered to be the cue carrying more weight. Forward body lean with the presence of smiling and brief touching also signified greater intimacy and lesser distance, while smiling and touch were understood to convey greater composure, nonarousal and informality. High eye contact and close proximity expressed greater dominance and control. The authors assess the results about touching as being the least reliable in their study.

Proximity was found to be the one nonverbal cue that had the most influence on relational interpretations. Nonverbal cues were found to be relatively additive in meaning, e.g. frequent eye contact strengthens the impression of intimacy or dominance that close proximity has created. Accordingly, a cue that is incongruent with the previous one may modify the meaning of the behaviour. (Burgoon, Buller, Hale & deTurk 1984:370-371.) This is why it is important to study nonverbal cues in combinations (Burgoon & Dillman 1995:64). One may also notice that the same nonverbal cue, e.g. close proximity or touch, may convey several different meanings. Therefore, to ensure a "correct" interpretation, an interaction needs to be examined within the context of verbal and other nonverbal cues that are being expressed.

Burgoon and Dillman (1995) have further studied the immediacy behaviours of touch, proximity and eye contact. They conclude that touch and eye contact, as well as nonnormative distance (exceptionally close or distant proximity) are often interpreted as dominance signals. Touch, gaze and close proximity may also communicate immediacy and receptivity. This calls attention to the fact that dominance itself is multidimensional and varies, e.g. in its amount of politeness. Dominance is not necessarily communicated aggressively or negatively, though this

may often be the case in conflicts. Burgoon (1994) defines nonverbal communication as:

> "those behaviors other than words themselves that form a socially shared coding system; that is, they are . . . used with regularity among members of a speech community, and have consensually recognizable interpretations" (p.231).

Pfau (1990) has studied the way television, compared with radio, print, interpersonal communication and public address communication, exercises influence on its viewers. In his study college students were exposed to short persuasive messages presented via one of these communication channels. In the results, television, unlike radio or print, was found to place a greater emphasis on relational messages as opposed to content messages. In this aspect television was found to resemble interpersonal communication; it accents nonverbal communication and is able to depict facial expressions from a very close distance. This speaks for the utility in applying interpersonal communication theories for the analysis of television content, even though the context in Pfau's study is different from the context of this study.

2.3 Patterns of Communication

The third axiom of Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson (1967:54-59) deals with *punctuation of interaction*. This refers to the way people organise the exchange of messages into meaningful patterns. That is, what they perceive to form a sequence of interaction. The basic idea behind this axiom is that to the communicators interpersonal communication is not an uninterrupted flow of interaction. Interpersonal communication, like written language, is arranged into sequences, but, unlike written language, the sequences are defined subjectively.

The communicators may have a different understanding about where an interactional sequence of events ends and another begins. This is argued to be connected to the development of conflicts in romantic relationships. For example, a couple may have a relationship problem to which the husband contributes with passive withdrawal and the wife with nagging criticism. When the partners explain their frustrations, the husband states that his withdrawal is a response to his wife's nagging. She, on the other hand, feels that her criticism is provoked by her husband's passivity. This is a

Analogic signs, on the other hand, are more intrinsically related to what they express; e.g. an angry tone of voice is directly related to the feeling it communicates. There exist different intensities of analogic signs, they do not have the either-or nature typical of digital communication. Analogic communication is predominantly used to define the relationship between the people interacting and this is mostly done through nonverbal communication. Thus analogic signs often function as a means for metacommunication, while the content message is usually delivered by digital communication. (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:64-65.) Nevertheless, Wilmot (1980:62) has pointed out that not all digital communication is necessarily linguistic, and verbal and nonverbal cues both have elements of digital and analogic communication.

While both digital and analogic communication are constantly in use, it has been suggested that individuals have difficulties in translating information from one code to another. Watzlawick Beavin & Jackson (1967:66-67, 101) state that this is one reason why it is often difficult for us to talk about relationships. When information about relationships is often delivered nonverbally/analogically, verbal/digital language can seem inadequate for metacommunication. Here it may be useful to pay attention to the inconsistencies that exist in the way Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson use the concept of metacommunication in connection to analogic and digital communication (see Wilmot 1980). Metacommunication is sometimes referred to as the nonverbal classification of the content message (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:64). On other occasions, metacommunication also refers to explicit discussions about the relationship (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:53). Consequently sometimes just analogic and sometimes both analogic and digital communication is said to be used to metacommunicate; these concepts are somewhat blurred in the original theory of relational communication. Wilmot (1980) points out:

> "In a communicative transaction, the participants process the entire package of
> cues and metacommunicative elements can arise from verbal or nonverbal
> cues...it is time to abandon the digital/analogic dichotomy and examine all
> types of metacommunication regardless of their channel of transmission."
> (p.62.)

This study supports Wilmot's view, and uses the concept in a broader sense, covering all communication about a relationship whether analogic or digital, verbal or nonverbal. Therefore, according to this study, when a message about the relationship is conveyed, metacommunication has taken place.

2.5 Power and Dominance in Communication

Finally, the fifth axiom of the Palo Alto group deals with the exchange of messages in interpersonal interaction. The axiom states that this exchange can be based on either similarity or difference in communication. In the first case the partners tend to respond similarly to one another; they mirror each other's behaviour. When this occurs, the relationship is said to be *symmetrical*. In the second case, behaviour of the communicators differ from each other; a partner's response complements the behaviour of the other. This kind of relationship is said to be *complementary*. (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:68.) For example, if both partners are trying to assert power, the relationship is symmetrical, on the other hand, if the other one is domineering and the other one submissive, the relationship is complementary.

Millar and Rogers (1988, 1976) have further studied control in relationships based on symmetrical and complementary interaction. They utilise a relational control coding system to classify verbal statements into three categories according to how each statement tries to define the relationship between the communicators. These control manoeuvres locate power in the relationship. If speakers make statements that assert definitions of the relationship, the statements are said to be one-up movements(↑). If they accept the other person's definition, or request that the other takes control, the statements are said to be one-down movements(↓). Finally, if the speakers give no relational definition, they are said to make a one-across statements (→) . (Millar & Rogers 1988:83.)

These control manoeuvres become meaningful when they are studied as patterns of messages and responses. The communicators negotiate the meaning of communication in interaction (Stamp, Vangelisti & Knapp 1994:197); it is the way the partners respond to each other that creates control in their relationship. Each response comments on the previous statement, and this defines the relationship at that moment. If one partner sends a one-up message and the other responds with a one-down message, the exchange of messages is complementary and the first speaker is characterised to be *dominant*. If a one-up message is answered with another one-up statement, the exchange of messages is complementary and both of the communicators are characterised as *domineering*, but not dominant; they are both

trying to assert control without the other speaker granting it to them. (Millar & Rogers 1988:89.) Thus, "domineeringness" is characteristic of an idividual's communication, while dominance is an outcome of the communication process between two people (Courtright, Miller & Rogers-Millar 1979:167.) The situation where both parties act in a domineering fashion is called *competitive* symmetry as opposed to *submissive* symmetry, when both partners are sending one-down messages. *Neutralised* symmetry takes place when both speakers use one-across messages. (Millar & Rogers 1976:97.)

If the statements made by the speakers are different, but not opposite (e.g. one-down/one across), their relationship is in a *transitional* state. There are four different combinations of control messages that can form transitional interaction. Control patterns in a relationship can be characterised along two continua. First, the *rigid-flexible continuum* describes how often the dominant position changes from one partner to another. For example, if the wife dominates almost all situations, the relationship is rigid. If dominance varies from situation to another, the relationship is flexible. The *stable-unstable continuum* describes the predictability of these control manoeuvres. If the same pattern of control repeats itself over time the control is said to be stable. To the contrary, if it is impossible to predict control patterns in a relationship, control is said to be unstable. (Millar & Rogers 1976:91-92.) For example, a relationship may be simultaneously flexible and stable if the wife is usually dominant in family matters and the husband in financial matters.

Bateson (1958) defines the situation of schismogenesis *as "a process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals"* (p.175). A schismogenesis develops from a repeated pattern of either complementary or symmetrical interaction. The behaviour of one partner either triggers an increasingly symmetrical or complementary behaviour from the other and vice versa. This creates a continuing spiral of interaction that is often difficult to stop. (Bateson 1958:175-177; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:67-68.) Tannen (1986:62) suggests that gender differences in conversational styles may cause a schismogenesis in romantic relationships which may in turn lead to a spiral of unnecessary conflicts.

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The Palo Alto group also recognises the possibility of a situation where a person lets or forces the other, for example, to be in charge (Waztlawick, Beavin & Jackson 1967:69). For example, a wife can let her husband to think and act like he is the one controlling their relationship without this necessarily being the case; or "force" him to act like he holds the power, in order to save face. However, these kinds of considerations are excluded from the theory of the Palo Alto group. Relational communication concentrates mainly, and deliberately, on observable behaviour without placing much interest in why people act in a certain way. Thus, considering this study, this theory does not reveal anything about the motives and emotions behind the actions and utterances of partners. This failure to deal with the perspective of the communicator is considered to be one of the main weaknesses of relational communication theory (Littlejohn 1996:279). However, this is not problematic for the conducting of the current study since the only possible perspective of the behaviour of a television character is, obviously, that of an outside observer. Thus, this "absent" feature of relational communication theory makes it even more suitable to this study.

The theory of relational communication offers several ideas that may be of use in describing the conflict behaviour of *Kotikatu*'s characters. The concept of metacommunication directs attention to what kind of relational messages the partners convey with their utterances; what takes place on a metacommunicative level during the conflicts. The power relations between the characters may be approached through relational control. The one-up, one-down or one-across manoeuvres adopted by the partners reveal whether they are behaving dominantly or domineeringly. Also the process of schismogenesis is interesting - do the couples in *Kotikatu* engage in this kind of spiral of interaction? Is the schismogenesis complimentary or symmetrical?

3 CONFLICT AND POWER IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 Defining Interpersonal Conflict and Power

In order to analyse interpersonal conflict it is first necessary to define it. In the following chapter the definitions of conflict and power will be examined. Since the conflicting needs for involvement and independence are continuously present in everyday life we engage in conflict management situations all the time without necessarily giving it much thought. Hocker and Wilmot (1991) define interpersonal conflict as

> "*an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.* " (p.12.)

According to this definition, an interpersonal conflict must be expressed in order to exist. That is, hard feelings held against another do not create a conflict before they are communicated and also recognised by the other.

In order for a conflict to take place both parties must also acknowledge their interdependence; if one is not dependent on the other in any way, they do not engage in a conflict. In order to successfully manage conflicts, the parties have to agree about their level of interdependence, which in intimate relationships is often, though not always, perceived to be relatively high. The negotiation over the degree of interdependence is present in most conflicts; the parties have to determine how much they let the other person influence their choices. People who define themselves as highly interdependent also have to define who they are as a unit; what kind of conflict management do they engage in. (Hocker & Wilmot 1991:15-16.) In conclusion: "*relationship and interdependence issues precede other issues in a conflict*" (Hocker & Wilmot 1991:17).

Conflict situations also imply that the parties see their goals as incompatible. This can happen in two ways: the partners may want the same thing, e.g. to read the newspaper's TV-section first, or their goals can be different, e.g. they wish to eat at different restaurants. The couple also has to perceive the resources available as being scarce, e.g. there is only one newspaper available, or they can only go to one restaurant at the time. However, a situation of incompatible goals and scarce

resources becomes a conflictual only after the parties experience interference from one another in achieving their goals. (Hocker & Wilmot 1991:17-21.) When the partners realise that the other person might stop them from achieving their goals, a conflict is ready to break out.

An interpersonal conflict results from the parties' *perception* of the above mentioned factors. This does not mean that goals necessarily are incompatible or resources scarce. Nor does it guarantee that the perceived goals or resources are what the conflict really is about. (Hocker & Wilmot 1991:18-19). Though undoubtedly sometimes people do know exactly what they are in conflict about and why the situation has emerged, they probably just as often do not know exactly what they are arguing about, especially in close intimate relationships that are by nature, multileveled and complex.

Also, the idea of scarce resources can be problematic. Often conflicts in intimate relationships have to do with, for example, attention, affection and support (Cahn:1995:384); or self-esteem and power (Hocker & Wilmot 1991:19). Excluding the concept of power, which will be considered later, one can argue that perceiving these kind of resources to be as scarce can easily become a self-fulfilling fallacy. There is no reason why, for example, the high self-esteem of one partner should lower the self-esteem of the other. The idea of scarce resources, which is not only popular in communication science, leads to distributive conflict management tactics, and often limits creative thinking in managing conflict situations.

An element of *power* is present at all times in interpersonal relationships. In conflictual situations the use of power may surface and become more overt than it is during the calmer periods of a relationship. Power is an important element to conflicts in intimate relationships, where we often hope to affect our partner's behaviour, but, as mentioned before, the notion of conflict should not be simplified to include only a struggle for power.

Power as a concept has given rise to a wide number of different definitions. The basic idea of power as an ability to influence other people's behaviour (Burgoon, & Dillman 1995:65) is present in most definitions and is easy to accept. Berger

(1994:453) has identified two positions shared by many definitions of social power. First is the ability of powerful people to change the behaviour and feelings of others. According to the second position, the powerful person's ability to exercise power over the target of power is related to the target's ability to resist influence or affect the outcomes of the person in power.

The latter position approaches a relational view of power, *"power in interpersonal relations is a property of the social relationship rather than a quality of the individual outside of the relationship"* (Hocker & Wilmot 1994:79). According to this definition also accepted in this study, power is produced through social interaction and, like conflict, power relations need to be perceived in order to exist. Furthermore, power relationships require cooperation; *"It is virtually impossible, philosophically, empirically and existentially, to control anybody unless they let us"* (Millar & Rogers, 1988:95). Although there are contexts where power is structured in a certain way, for example, an employer-employee relationship, this does not automatically create a power relationship. If an employee does not care about the power resources that an employer possesses in relation to him or her, the employer has no power over the employee's behaviour. Therefore, power needs to be acknowledged. Emerson (1962, in Berger 1994) defines power as dependence *"The power of A over B is equal to, and based upon, the dependence of B upon A"* (p.425). This dependence is created by B pursuing goals that A can either help B to attain or prevent B from reaching. This is definitely one way people may hold power over others.

Power and social relationships can also been explained in terms of the costs and benefits they bring to people. This is the central idea behind social exchange theories. They state that in interpersonal relationships individuals evaluate the outcomes of the relationship and compare these to their internal standards, as well as to the costs and benefits of a possible alternative relationship, or the alternative of being alone. For example, this may be offered as an explanation for people staying in unhappy marriages: the alternatives are estimated to be even worse than the unsatisfying relationship. When a person receives a lot of benefits from a relationship, the outcomes of that relationship are evaluated as being more positive than other alternative scenarios. This way the individual becomes more and more dependent on

the relationship. At the same time this person's power in the relationship reduces. Consequently, the partner that has the least to gain from the relationship is less dependent on the other, and, thus, the more powerful one. This is consistent with the idea that in romantic relationships the least interested party holds more power, because being person who is less dependent means having the other at their mercy. (Berger 1994:459.)

This view of power, as suggested by the social exchange theories, is tempting due to its clarity and explanatory force. It is easy to agree with the idea that people often stay in unsatisfying relationships due to the lack of better alternatives. However, one must be sceptical about the idea that people are rational beings who calmly pursue certain goals, or calculate costs and benefits in their social relationships. Human relationships are rarely that simple. Intimate relationships are often based on feelings, and feelings are not based on rational calculations. Even when people do estimate costs and benefits, this is a subjective evaluation that may even lead some to stay in destructive relationships that, to any observer, are clearly worse than the alternatives. Social exchange theories are also a good example of a problem that is present in many communication theories: unintentional ethnocentricity. Similar to the principles of classical liberalism, social exchange theories assume individualism and rationalism to be universal human characteristics when in fact, proof exists to the contrary. For example, in many parts of the world people may stay in unsatisfying relationships because the good of the community is regarded as more important than their individual happiness. This reduces the explanatory power of social exchange theories. Both Fitch (1994) and Lannamann (1994) have discussed this and other ideological assumptions inherent in interpersonal communication theory.

Interpersonal power relations are rarely totally asymmetrical. Normally both interactants are able to influence each other; influence is mutual. This is especially true in intimate relationships where partners are supposed to be, more or less, equal. The negotiation of power relations is an ongoing and often subtle process that is always present in interactions and may surface in conflict situations.

Tannen (1993:166-167) has examined the relationship between power and solidarity. These concepts are in paradoxical relation to each other since each one entails the

involvement of the other. A show of power inevitably entails solidarity since it involves the parties in relation to one another bringing them closer than two people that have no relation. As well, every show of solidarity has a power element attached to it since the suggestion of similarity and closeness also implies lack of independence and freedom. Accordingly, one may suggest that arguments and power struggles can bring a couple closer, especially when the conflict is settled. Often people argue with their partner in a way they do not argue with anyone else, and this is one thing that makes the relationship unique and special. Even if there is a fierce and ongoing argument between partners, the fact that they are willing to use so much time and energy into arguing with each other implies closeness of the relationship. Sometimes conflict behaviour can be the only channel of communication still open for a couple and the choice to use that channel, instead of withdrawing from the relationship, shows involvement. (Tannen 1993:166-167.)

In this study the term *dominance* or *relational control* is used more often than power. According to Burgoon and Dillman (1995:65) dominance is one means of expressing power. Power does not need to be manifested as dominance, but dominant people always seem to possess power as well. Dominance is defined in terms of responses. In connection to relational communication, a dominant person evokes deferent or compliant responses from other people.

3.2 Attributions Theory of Conflict

The way we behave in conflict situations is connected to what we perceive to be the source of the conflict - where we place the blame. This chapter will discuss a theory developed on the basis of this idea.

3.2.1 Conflict Management Strategies

Sillars & al. (1980a;1980b; 1986[1]; Sillars, Parry, Coletti & Rogers 1982) have classified the ways people manage conflicts into three categories. These conflict

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[1] Sillars, A.L. 1986. *Manual for coding interpersonal conflict* (unpublished manuscript).

management strategies or tactics include (1) an attempt to avoid or ignore conflict, *avoidance*; (2) an attempt to win the conflict, *competitive* or *distributive* behaviour; and (3) an attempt to achieve mutually favourable outcomes from the conflict, *cooperative* or *integrative* conflict management tactics. These conflict management tactics are designed to apply to a variety of interpersonal contexts and have been successfully used in research concerning marital communication (Sillars, Pike, Tricia & Redmond 1983; Fitzpatrick, Falls & Vance 1980) and an individual's sex as a variable in conflict situations (Conrad 1991). There are also other ways of categorising people's responses to interpersonal conflicts (see Wood 1998:243-245), but as the interest of this study lies in the overall development of conflict situations, the above mentioned strategies were chosen. The term conflict *management* is chosen for this study instead of conflict *resolution*. Conflict resolution refers to an aspiration to bring the conflict to an end, while conflict management consists of all the means people use to deal with conflicts, including avoidance and other tactics that do not necessarily seek to resolve the situation (Cahn 1995:392).

Avoidance strategies minimise explicit discussion about conflicts. Statements that deny the presence of a conflict or change the topic of conversation are part of avoidance behaviour. The only way a person using avoidance strategies is willing to communicate about the conflict is indirectly or ambiguously. Semantic focus, i.e. a focus on the words expressed more than on the conflict issues communicated, is also an avoidance strategy for managing conflicts. Distributive tactics, on the other hand, involve verbally competitive or individualistic behaviours: negative messages like insults, personal criticism, overt demonstrations of hostility and sarcasm. They may also include compliance gaining. Integrative strategies promote collaboration by open and positive communication that seeks to end the conflict in a way that satisfies both parties. This includes statements that directly discuss the conflict. (Canary & Spitzberg 1990:143; Sillars & al. 1982:82-83; Sillars 1980b:218.)

Sillars & al. (1982:84) state that the three categories of conflict management strategies reflect two dimensions of communication that are present in any conflict situation. First, the *directness* or *disclosiveness* of communication. Distributive and integrative strategies are both seen as relatively direct and disclosive communication, while avoidance strategies are not. The second dimension describes the

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competitiveness of communication. On this dimension the differences between distributive and integrative tactics becomes clear. Competitive and non-competitive forms of avoidance are not recognised as separate categories.

3.2.2 Attributions in Conflicts

The theoretical approach to interpersonal conflict developed by Sillars stems fom attributions theory, which states that interactants understand social phenomena by inferring the causes of events. These inferences about causes of behaviour are called attributions, and in interpersonal conflicts, they play a significant role in determining the direction and outcome of a conflict. There are three ways in which attributions affect communicative decisions in conflicts. First, individuals choose conflict management strategies based on attributions about what and who is responsible for the conflict. Second, perceptual biases in the attribution process discourage the use of cooperative strategies of conflict management. Biased perceptions about other people's behaviour lead people to use competitive strategies. *Salience* and *actor-observer bias* are two perceptual biases frequently at work in conflicts. Salience refers to active, intense and negative stimuli being used more in making social inferences than passive or neutral stimuli. (Canary & Spitzberg 1990:140.) In a study about the conversations of married couples Sillars, Pike, Jones and Murphy (1984) found that in relatively satisfied relationships negative affect and distributive conflict tactics were positively related to understanding one's spouse. Sillars & al. (1984:343) argue that negative conflict behaviours are more salient and more easily recognised by a spouse than positive or neutral conflict tactics, which are more ambiguous and subtle, and therefore less used in making attributions. However, Canary and Spitzberg (1990) did not find support for this result.

The other common perceptional bias, actor-observer bias, refers to the general tendency of individuals to use more contextual information in explaining their own behaviour than in explaining the behaviour of others. People tend to see themselves as responding to circumstances while attributing a partner's behaviour to their internal states or traits. This causes us to overestimate the extent to which the behaviour of others is a reflection of their personality. (Canary & Spitzberg

1990:141.) Thus, other people are often seen as personally responsible for negative situations. In such a case, when more responsibility for a conflict is attributed to one party, the other is more likely to respond to distributive statements with distributive tactics and further escalate the conflict (Sillars 1980b:233). The actor-observer bias is partly due to the different information that is available to actors or observers. Sillars (1980b:218) points out the term's close relation to the already mentioned problem of *punctuation* that may result in each party attributing the responsibility for initiating a conflict sequence to the other. Research does indicate that the blame for conflict is placed more upon the partner than the self (e.g. Sillars 1980a; Canary & Spitzberg 1990).

The third implication of attribution processes to conflict behavior is that the chosen conflict management strategy affects the outcome of the conflict; cooperative strategies encourage information exchange while competitive strategies easily escalate the conflict. Attributions affect interpersonal strategies because they influence emotions and evaluations about individuals, which in turn create expectations for future events. (Sillars 1980b.)

The conflict management strategies that a person uses may change from one conflict to another because of, among other things, different attributions. Strategy may also vary during the same conflict situation as a response to a partner's communication. For example, Sillars (1980b) studied videotapes of college roommates discussing conflict issues and found that subjects often reciprocated their partner's previous act and strategy. Most interesting was the tendency to reciprocate avoidance strategies that was particularly strong. This varying nature of conflict management strategies separates them from conflict styles, which refer to a relatively stable manner of handling conflicts that is typical for a certain individual or group (Burgoon, Hunsaker & Dawson 1994:324). According to this idea conflict style should predict the tactics that a person uses in managing conflicts. However, there is little evidence to support this claim (e.g. Conrad 1991). This study uses the concept of conflict strategies as the varying ways people choose to act in conflict situations. We do not necessarily manage conflicts in the same style in, for example, work-, and intimate contexts. Instead, in intimate relationships, with a certain person and in a certain context, we may develop a recurrent way of behaving in conflict situations.

Conrad (1991) suggests that conflict management strategies should not be studied only as patterns of messages and responses but also on a broader scale as choices being made during a number of interactions, while the conflict situation develops. Who makes what general strategy shifts at which point of the conflict is an interesting question which shall be addressed in this study's analysis of conflict behaviour in *Kotikatu*. Also Burgoon (1994), as well as Werner and Baxter (1994) call for research that acknowledges the evolving nature of interpersonal communication and include the study of longitudinal change in interaction and relationships.

The attributions theory of conflict offers several tools for the analysis of conflict in the intimate relationships of *Kotikatu*. The conflict management strategies help us identify and name the different ways the characters cooperate, compete or avoid conflict situations. This theory also directs our attention to the causes of conflicts; who do the characters blame for initiating the conflict and how are these attributions reflected in the behaviour of the characters? This study will also find out whether the characters exhibit perceptual biases in their communication.

4 GENDER AND COUPLE TYPE IN COMMUNICATION

4.1 Gender as a Cultural Factor

There exists a close relationship between communication and culture. Culture manifests itself in communication and communication, on the other hand, creates, sustains and reproduces culture. Our patterns of communication reflect our cultural values and beliefs. (Wood 1997a:248.) When we study intercultural communication within an interpersonal context our interest lies in *the "investigation of those elements of culture that most influence interaction when members of two different cultures come together in an interpersonal setting"* (Porter & Samovar 1997:8). This study hopes to determine whether there are elements of gendered communication cultures that are significant in describing the conflict interaction of couples in a Finnish television drama serial.

First, we need to look into the concepts of culture and gender. *Culture* has been defined in a vast number of ways. One of the best known definitions is Hofstede's (1991:5) *"collective programming of the mind..."* The approach of this study is closer to Geertz's (1973) webs of shared meanings people attach to the actions of their daily lives, i.e. socially established structures of meaning. It is the opinion of this research that trying to find an exhaustive definition for a concept like culture is a futile exercise, because we are dealing with a highly abstract and ambiguous concept that is impossible to grasp in its totality. Also, the terms itself is a part of culture, so different groups attach different meanings to it. Scollon (1997) has problematicised the idea of culture as an unified object and argues for using the term as *"a patterned storehouse of communicative tools"* (p.8) These tools rise from the symbols and meanings that are made in the historical and cultural conditions of the people who have used them and are using them now. Each cultural group has developed its own social practises through which tools for communication are created.

When culture is approached from a gender perspective, as is the case in this study, *speech community theory* and Gudykunst's and Lim's (1986) concept of *intergroup communication* are also worth considering. Speech community theory was developed during the seventies by scholars like Suzanne Langer and William Labov. This

theory is interested in discovering the way social groups implant styles of communicating and interpreting communication into their members. These styles develop into distinct communication rules that guide the communication of a speech community. This way the culture of the speech community forms the context that shapes the way its members interact. Misunderstandings that repeatedly surface in communication are explained by differences in these rules that define, for example, the way we use talk. (Wood 1997a:260-263.) Also intergroup communication takes place in situations where the membership of a social group influences the way we behave. Social groups are formed through similar social identifications that, in turn, are part of one's self-concept. Gender is one possible source of these identifications; e.g. ethnic background and social class are others. (Gudykunst and Lim 1986:3-4.)

It is essential to note that we do not share one culture, but many simultaneously. While people identify themselves as either female or male, they are also representatives of their generation, social class, nationality, the community in which they work or study, and many other aspects. In different contexts the membership of different groups becomes significant; individuals may use communicative tools from different storehouses of culture. One of the assumptions considered in this study is that in the intimate relationships of television drama, gender discourse is at least one aspect that is deemed to be significant. This assumption is based mostly on American literature on real-life relationships and television content and this study will uncover whether it holds true in the case of *Kotikatu*.

Furthermore, even within one cultural group there exists heterogeneity. Cultural generalisations about a group only suggest that a large portion of its members are believed to have a tendency to resort to similar behaviour in certain situations. It does not suggest that all representatives of a given cultural group will act the same. Also, as Scollon (1997) points out, "*any intercultural exchange by virtue of taking place already alters the cultural identities of the participants*" (p.6). The fact that men and women, like different nationalities and generations, do communicate with each other all the time makes communication cultures mix and enables the borrowing of communicative tools from one another. However, this does not abolish different cultural groups, we may still identify with, and know the practices of, some groups more than others.

Gender has been mentioned as one of the factors forming sociolinguistic cultural groups or speech communities that this study is interested in examining. In order to understand the concept of gender it needs to be defined in relation to *sex*. This study uses the definitions put forth by Canary and Emmers-Sommer (1997:5-7), as well as Canary and Dindia (1998:4), where sex is understood to be the biological distinction between male and female, while gender refers to social, psychological and cultural differentiation; manifestations of what people believe to be male or female thinking and behaviour. These manifestations can reflect one's own biological sex, but this is not necessarily the case. Accordingly, when differences or similarities in behaviour are attributed to biology the research is said to be about sex differences. On the other hand, when differences or similarities are thought to derive from socially constructed identities, research is said to be about gender. Gender is not as easily defined as sex; it is constructed through every-day social interaction and a person's gender identity may vary through time, as can the people of the same sex differ largely in their gender identifications. There exists an ongoing debate about how much genetic makeup, on one hand, and socialisation, on the other, affect our behaviour. Lately also the importance of biology has gained support as can be observed in the usage of the word *sex* in the titles of some recent books and articles.

According to Canary and Emmers-Sommer (1997:148-149) sex implicitly influences gender roles; social and physical developments are intertwined. For example, puberty, pregnancy and motherhood influence a woman's understand of her identity in a way that is clearly different from the experiences of men. Genes have something to do with gender identifications, but according to the view adopted in this study, while genes determine sex, gender is culturally determined. Rakow (1986) has defined gender in much the same way culture was considered above:

> *"Gender is both something we do and something we think with, both a set of social practices and a system of cutural meanings."* (p.21)

Beginning with the idea that gender divides people in terms of social practices and cultural meanings, one should not go on arguing that this division makes it impossible for men and women to understand each other. People continuously interact with others that have different group identifications without much difficulty. Naturally, as surely as gender differences exist, there also exist gender similarities (e.g. Canary & Dindia 1998:2-3); there are many cultural symbols and meanings that

are shared by masculine and feminine communication cultures. This, however, does not make the situations when we do see things differently less significant. One may expect to find these cases specially in "real life", as well as depicted, intimate relationships where the partners are supposed to understand each other more deeply than in many of their other daily encounters.

4.2 Gender Differences in Communication

This chapter shall examine the theory about gender differences in communication. First some possible reasons for the development of feminine and masculine communication cultures shall be considered. Then we shall examine the way gender identifications are manifested in the way people talk. Finally, some findings about gender and nonverbal communication shall be highlighted.

4.2.1 Explaining Gender Differences

Whether gender differences in interpersonal communication exist is a controversial question (Wood & Dindia 1998; Canary & Emmers-Sommer 1997:7-11) The researchers who maintain that such differences are real see them as stemming from the cultural constructs of gender communicated to us from birth onwards by the surrounding society. With time and through socialisation we come to accept these constructs and adopt the gender identity that is prevalent in the society. Proof of such gender socialisation at a very early age has been found in children's games. In their classic study Malz and Borker (1982) found girls and boys to normally play in same sex groups engaging in different games. This was taken to show how, even at an early age, children adopt different gender identities. The games girls engaged in were played in small groups and did not have preset rules or objectives. The girls usually negotiated and made decisions together to determine how the play was going to proceed. In order to decide how the play is to proceed girls usually negotiate and make decisions together. Girls' games took place within a cooperative, sensitive and inclusive orientation, where relationships were emphasised.

Boys, on the other hand, tended to play in large groups and progress by preset rules and objectives. The games boys engaged in tended to emphasise achievement and competition. Boys also liked to play rough games, where talk was used to establish one's status and to achieve outcomes. In same-sex arguments the girls' style was characterised as persuasive, while boys were more confrontational. These differing characteristics of children's play may carry over into adulthood and result in differing conceptions about talk, what it does, how it is to be used, and how communication is punctuated. This view has, however, also received criticism (see Wood & Dindia 1998:31-32).

Another explanation given for gendered behaviour is that feminine and masculine identities start to develop in the early years of childhood due to the mother-child relationship. Since in most cases the primary caretaker of a child is female, often the mother, a female child is able to identify with her caretaker and develop her identity within this primary relationship much longer than a male child. In order for a boy to develop his identity, he must realise he is different from his mother, and withdraw from this primary relationship. This leads to two different ways of defining oneself: boys independently of others and girls in relation to others, thus resulting in different ways of communicating. (Wood 1997b:167.)

Wood and Dindia (1998:21-22) put forth the idea previously promoted by e.g. Henley (1975) that power differences between women and men are a reason for gender differences. It is because of unequal social power that women, as well as other minorities, have had to learn 'coping skill', ways of keeping out of trouble with the more powerful group. Hence,

> "those who hold subordinate social roles learn to interpret subtle nonverbal behaviors; defer, please, notice, and attend to others' needs; speak tentatively and indirectly; be nonthreatening; and make others comfortable." (p.21)

According to this view, feminine communication culture is a result of the subordinate position of women in society. Thus, if one day women and men were treated completely equally, these differences would disappear. For example, if women were not expected to be more nurturing than men, in time, they would cease to be so. On the other hand, Mulac and Bradac (1995:101), who have studied different styles in problem solving interaction, oppose the juxtaposing of the terms *feminine* and *powerless*. They argue that men and women use different linguistic styles, but the

feminine communication style may be just as effective in influencing others as its masculine counterpart. The division of social power does not sufficiently explain the differences in the communication of women and men; the phenomenon is too complex to be covered solely in terms of power.

It is wise to remember that when gender is referred to as being more socially than biologically constructed one must be willing to accept that gender roles do not reveal anything inherent about men or women. They may shift radically in time and from one larger culture to another. For example, assuming that *Kotikatu* reflects Finnish reality, it can be expected to include less gender stereotypes than its American counterparts, because the Finnish society can be considered as more "equal".

Also, as social constructs, gender identifications are not the same for all women or men. This study supports the view that both men and women posses both masculine and feminine characteristics; masculinity and femininity are not the opposite ends of a single continuum (see Spence & Buckner 1995:135; Pearson & Cooks 1995:333). Often, however, women adopt more of the characteristics of the feminine, and men the characteristics of the masculine communication culture. Exceptional gender identities come about when a person grows up in an exceptional environment, or for some other reason rejects the gender identification prevalent in the surrounding society.

4.2.2 Gender Preferential Uses of Talk

What, then, are the actual differences in the behaviour of women and men? How do feminine and masculine communication cultures manifest themselves in communication? Due to the situational nature of all communication, general differences, which would hold in different situational contexts, are difficult to determine; the reported differences are often inconsistent from one study to another (see Aries 1998:69). However, the recurrent appearance of some characteristics of feminine and masculine communication provides evidence for their existence in more than one context. Several studies suggest that women place more emphasis on relationship or connection than on independence and this shows in the ways they

communicate (Tannen 1993:302, Wood 1998:269). The feminine prioritisation of relationships leads to placing emphasis on metacommunication, as well as perceiving talk as a way to connect with others and, especially in intimate relationships, establish closeness in dialogue (Tannen 1986:135). To achieve this, women, for example, frequently use response cues to show their involvement in the conversation (Wood 1997b:170), self-disclose more (Pearson, West & Turner 1995:175; Reis 1998:213), and talk about personal feelings and the relationship to a greater degree than most men. Women may also use talk to keep an interaction flowing smoothly and to make others feel included. (Tannen 1993:302.) Wood (1997b) has listed the ways feminine communication culture advises people to use talk:

1. **Use talk to build and sustain rapport with others.**
2. **Share yourself and learn about others through disclosing.**
3. **Use talk to create symmetry or equality between people.**
4. **Matching experiences with others shows understanding and empathy**
   ("I know how you feel.")
5. **To support others, express understanding of their feelings.**
6. **Include others in conversation by asking their opinions and encouraging**
   them to elaborate. Wait your turn to speak so others can participate.
7. **Keep the conversation going by asking questions and showing interest**
   in others' ideas.
8. **Be responsive. Let others know you hear and care about what they say.**
9. **Be tentative so that others feel free to add their ideas.**
10. **Talking is a human relationship in which details and interesting**
    side comments enhance depth and connection. (p. 169)

What, then, are the characteristics that American researchers find associated with masculine communication culture? Generally, men are found to emphasise independence, power and attention to outcomes. Successful men compete and win in different arenas and this promotes assertiveness, sometimes even aggression, in their communication. (Wood 1997b:168.) Men seem to disclose less than most women; one possible explanation for this is that in the masculine communication culture self-disclosure is perceived as being dangerous since it makes a person vulnerable (Pearson, West & Turner 1995:164-165, 175). Cline and Musolf (1985:52-53) found that men disclosed less when expecting their relationship with a female to continue for a long time

than when the relationship was perceived to be short-term. Females, on the other hand, disclosed substantially more in a long-term relationship. This difference in the amount of self-disclosure has been suggested to cause problems in intimate relationships. (Cline & Musolf 1985:52-53.) Masculine communication culture perceives talk as mainly instrumental; talk is used to achieve goals or solve problems, and closeness is created through shared activities instead of talk. The masculine emphasis on maintaining independence and autonomy also makes talk about relationships less desirable than in the feminine communication culture. (Wood 1997b:170-171.) Wood (1997b) has listed the following suggestions as typical to masculine communication culture:

1. **Use talk to assert yourself and your ideas.**
2. **Personal disclosure can make you vulnerable.**
3. **Use talk to establish your status and power.**
4. **Matching experiences is a competitive strategy to command attention. ("I can top that.")**
5. **To support others, do something helpful - give advice or solve a problem for them.**
6. **Don't share the talk stage with others; wrest it from them with communication. Interrupt others to make your own points.**
7. **Each person is on her or his own; it's not your job to help others join in.**
8. **Use responses to make your own points and to outshine others.**
9. **Be assertive so others perceive you as confident and in command.**
10. **Talking is a linear sequence that should convey information and accomplish goals. Extraneous details get in the way and achieve nothing. (p.169)**

Though these features have been found to prevail in masculine communication culture, they are not able to determine male behaviour; men may choose not to comply with these rules. For example, while studying married couples Fitzpatrick and Mulac (1995) found that when interacting with one's spouse, both men and women used feminine gender preferential language. When speaking with their wives, husbands converged towards the feminine style of communication. This did not happen in conversations with other women. The authors suggest that the feminine style is the style for relationships for both males and females, regardless of gender preferential language use in other contexts.

4.2.3 Manifestations of Gender in Nonverbal Communication

In the domain of nonverbal communication, Hall (1998) has concluded in his meta-analysis of previous studies that there is abundant evidence of relatively large differences in two areas: smiling and nonverbal sensitivity. Women are more sensitive in both sending and receiving nonverbal cues than men are, and women tend to smile more than men. According to Pearson, West & Turner (1995:122-123) females are also more likely to return smiles, and are smiled at more than men. Possibly as a result of women smiling more, their smiles are more ambiguous and difficult to interpret than the smiles of men. Cashdan (1998:221) found no evidence supporting the hypothesis that smiling is connected to low personal power. In her study of well-acquainted white American university students in same- and mixed-sex peer groups, women with high sociometric status smiled more than low-status women. Related to nonverbal sensitivity, women were found to be more sensitive in detecting verbal-nonverbal cue conflicts when judging the sincerity of a person (Pearson, West & Turner 1995:139). However, in a study of 33 Australian married couples, Noller and Feney (1994) found that over time, husbands also improve in their accuracy at understanding their spouse's nonverbal messages, and the gender difference in nonverbal decoding is diminished in this context. Gottman and Portefield (1981) suggest that a husband's ability in understanding his wife's nonverbal messages is also related to marital satisfaction. In their study of 43 American married couples, husbands in satisfied marriages were much better in decoding their wives nonverbal messages than husbands in dissatisfied relationships. Wives, on the other hand were able to understand their spouses nonverbal communication regardless of the level of happiness in the marriage.

With respect to gaze, the research often suggests that women establish more frequent eye contact during conversations than males do (see Pearson West & Turner 1995:121; Henley 1975:194). When studying the gaze and talk behaviour of American university students Mulac, Studley, Wiemann and Bradac (1987) found that female/female dyads engage in greater mutual gaze, while mutual gaze aversion is more characteristic of male/male dyads. These findings are consistent with the idea that women are more oriented towards the socio-emotional aspects of a conversation; leading them to place greater value on the information gathered from their

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conversational partner's face. In mixed-sex dyads, women were found to adapt to the behaviour of men when interacting with them; women already converged their gaze behaviour toward male stereotypes at the beginning of a problem-solving interaction. The behaviour of men, on the other hand, did not change according to the sex of the conversational partner. (Mulac, Studley, Wiemann & Bradac 1987.) Burgoon and Dillman (1995:67) point out that gender and status seem to have an influence on whether an individual's gaze is interpreted as communicating dominance or submission.

In the area of proximics, women are commonly observed to occupy less space than men (Henley 1995:35). The personal space area of women is smaller, and women are also approached more closely than men. The postures and stances men adopt take up more space; men tend to sit in open and relaxed positions with legs apart and arms away from their bodies. Women, on the other hand manifest more closed and rigid positions with legs being held more closely together and arms close to the body. (Pearson, West & Turner 1995:125-127.) Cashdan (1998:220) found that women rated higher in social power exhibited more open body posture and positioning of arms than their peers.

Touch is a powerful, but also very ambiguous nonverbal cue. When occurring between equals reciprocal touching is often interpreted as a sign of solidarity. In intimate contexts touch is often equalled with social and psychological closeness. (Knapp & Hall 1992.) Unilateral touching may function as an indicator of dominance for the person doing the touching, or a violation of personal space. In his study of predominantly white American university students, Jones (1986) found that women both initiated touching and were touched more frequently than men. Other studies have also supported this view, but results remain controversial. (Pearson, West & Turner 1995:128-129.)

In the area of conversational management, e.g. topic control and interruptions have been studied. Mulac, Wiemann, Widenmann and Gibson (1988) studied the language of university students in problem-solving conversations and found several gender differences. Men were found to interrupt more frequently and give more directions. They also maintained the floor with more frequent use of conjunctions/fillers when

beginning a sentence. Women used more questions, made greater use of justifiers, applied intensive adverbs and used more personal pronouns. However, gender differences were larger in same-sex than in mixed-sex dyads, where both genders accommodated some of their behaviour to the style of the other. Robey, Canary & Burggraf (1998) found husbands to use more backchannels (signs that show that they are listening actively, e.g. "yes," "uh-huh") when interacting with their spouse than wives did.

Dindia (1987) has criticised the statistical analysis used in several studies that have found gender differences in interruptions, and provides evidence against these results. In her study of half-an-hour conversations between university students in same- and mixed-sex dyads, men did not interrupt more than women; nor did females get interrupted more. The greatest amount of interruptions occurred in mixed-sex conversations, but women and men interrupted equally, though within a dyad interruptions were always distributed asymmetrically; one person always interrupted more than the other. Women were also found to interrupt as assertively as men. Females did not, for example, use more interruptive questions than men. Robey, Canary & Burggraf (1998) analysed the interaction of 20 American couples and did not find any difference between the interruptive behaviour of husband's and wives. However, they did find the wives to ask more questions than the husbands. Courtright, Millar and Rogers-Millar (1979:184) found a correlation between the interruptions of both husbands and wives and their domineeringness. Holmes (1998:469) notes that there are different kinds of interruptions and concludes that disruptive interruptions are a control device for asserting power in a relationship.

Differences appear also in the way the nonverbal behaviour of women and men is interpreted. Burgoon and Dillman (1995) suggest that gender may either intensify or deintensify the message expressed through nonverbal behaviour. For example, while engaging in a combination of close proximity, eye contact and touch, women are observed to be less dominant than men who manifest the same behaviour. Though women and men are equally capable of communicating dominance nonverbally and may also use exactly the same behaviours to do this, observers often interpret women's behaviour as showing solidarity or intimacy, while men are easily seen as behaving dominantly.

4.3 Gender Differences and Similarities in Conflict Situations

Studies about gender differences and similarities in managing interpersonal conflicts vary a lot in their findings (Canary & Hause 1993:129). However, several researchers agree to the existence of what Sagrestano, Heavey and Christensen (1998:291) call the *demand-withdraw interaction pattern* (see Gottman & Levenson 1988; Noller 1993:141-145; Wood 1998:247), which refers to a pattern of communication where one partner tries to discuss a problem and demands change in the situation by criticising and blaming the other. At the same time, the other attempts to avoid discussion, defends the self against criticism, and withdraws from the discussion. The more one partner tries to involve the other in dealing with an issue, the more the other withdraws, and this, in turn, has an even greater negative effect on the first partner. A pattern mentioned earlier as a complementary schismogenesis has developed.

Within this demand-withdraw interaction pattern women tend to be more demanding and emotional while men tend to withdraw and rationalise (Shaap, Bunk & Kersktra 1988:236). Both partners are generally more likely to be demanding when discussing topics that they have introduced themselves. This leads to the conclusion that women bring up conflictual topics more often than men do. A couple is also more likely to end up in the demand-withdraw interaction pattern when a woman requests that a man change than vice versa. (Sagrestano, Heavey & Cristensen 1998:298.) In her study of seven British married couples DeFrancisco (1998) found that husbands controlled the conversation by refusing to respond when their turn came, and by using patronising comments that hindered their wives from developing the conversation. As well, the general tendency of men to withdraw and women to talk did appear in a study conducted with lesbians and gay men (Wood 1998:247).

Several ideas have been offered to explain the recurrence of the demand-withdrawal interaction pattern. The Dutch scholars Shaap, Buunk & Kerkstra (1988:235) suggest that this pattern is triggered when a husband, either consciously or unconsciously, does not acknowledge his wife's expressions of negative feelings. This makes the wife feel neglected and unloved leading her to express her feelings more strongly, which, in turn result in the withdrawal of the husband. Sagrestano, Heavey &

Christensen (1998:292-293) conclude that the pattern may be related to the amount of closeness partners wish to experience in a relationship. The partner, who requests greater closeness can engage in demanding behaviour in order to achieve this goal, while the partner hoping for greater distance chooses to withdraw. This withdrawal also gives men power because they refuse to let the woman control the topic of conversation or have her complaints dealt with; withdrawal sustains the status quo in a relationship (Noller 1993:143). Women are suggested as being the more likely partners to want greater closeness and intimacy in a relationship. However, while the previous statement often seems to be correct it is possibly an undue simplification; women may want more verbal intimacy, i.e. talking about feelings, but that does not mean that men do not want closeness in their relationships too. (Rubin 1983:65-97.)

Gottman and Levenson (1988:189) maintain that men and women have different physiological reactions to tension and conflict. They connect the tendency of men to withdraw from conflicts with the high levels of physiological arousal men experience when facing intense negative affect. Behaviour called *stonewalling* refers to the situation where a partner controls and suppresses all emotionally expressive behaviour, verbal communication, as well as listener backchannel behaviour including nodding and eye contact. It can be described as behaviour where one of the parties involved in the conflict remains present while simultaneously refusing to discuss any of the issues. The stonewalling behaviour as exhibited by men withdrawing from conflicts may be very stressful and produce heightened physiological arousal. Men's state of arousal also returns slower to prestress levels than women's physiological state. According to this theory men withdraw from conflicts in order to reduce the negative affect that is physiologically more costly to them than to women. (Wood 1998:243; Gottman & Levenson 1988:189.)

Women are suggested to function more effectively than men in a climate of negative affect. Notarius and Johnson (1982) found that husbands tend to have a stronger physiological reaction to their wives negative speech than vice versa. The authors suggest that this might be due to a husband's tendency to suppress verbal expressions of emotion. Gottman (1979:168) found that in satisfied marriages, women were more likely to escalate conflicts in low intensity conflict situations, when men usually took the role of reconciler to brake the escalation of the conflict. On the other hand, in

heated high intensity conflict situations, men were likely to withdraw and women became more reconciling. In dissatisfied marriages neither partner took the role of reconciliator, and reciprocation of negative affect was more likely than in satisfied marriages.

In their recent study of 130 American couples from different ethnic backgrounds Gottman, Coan, Carrere & Swanson (1998) found a pattern of conflict behaviour predictive of divorce within six years of marriage. This pattern included a negative start-up by the wife, a refusal of the husband to accept influence from his wife, the wife's reciprocation of low intensity negativity and the absence of reconciling from the husband. The authors stress the importance of a husband's willingness to accept influence from his wife as a factor leading to successful or unsuccessful marriages. The one thing that seemed to predict marital happiness and stability was the amount of positive affect expressed in conflict situations. The signs of positive affect functioned to de-escalate conflict.

Another finding that surfaces repeatedly is that women are generally more negative, even coercive, and use more emotional pressure than men when dealing with conflicts in intimate relationships (Gottman & Levenson 1988:198; Notarius & Johnson 1982). For example, Cupach and Canary (1995) have surveyed over 100 married couples at two different times to assess how much they use integrative (cooperative), distributive (competitive) and avoidance strategies to manage conflicts. They found that wives reported using more distributive tactics, which were operationalised in the survey by sentences as: "I used threads," "I criticised an aspect of his/her personality," and "I shouted at him/her" (p.244). In the use of integrative and avoidance tactics, the spouses did not differ much, although men reported slightly higher use of both. The finding that women try to bring up conflict issues and discuss them more often than men is consistent with the previously reported aspects of feminine communication culture, but that women tend to do this in such a negative way is not. Notarius and Johnson (1982) found that wives tended to be more emotionally expressive of negative feelings than husbands. The spouses did not differ much in their positive verbal behaviour. Generally, gender differences between husbands and wives seem to emerge most clearly in dissatisfied marriages (Gottman 1988:187).

4.4 Relational Culture and Marriage Types

In addition to the view that gender identities influence communication and make interaction in intimate relationships take place between "intimate strangers" (Rubin 1983) some researchers maintain that married couples develop a *relational culture* – *"a privately transacted system of understandings that coordinate attitudes, actions, and identities of participants in a relationship"* (Wood 1982:76). This culture is suggested to make the communication of partners in an intimate relationship quite similar to each other. In her extensive studies on marital communication Mary Anne Fitzpatrick (1988a; 1988b; 1988c) has developed a typology for describing the relational culture of married couples by creating three couple types. Each type is the reflection of a couple's common orientation to marital life. Fitzpatrick has gathered her data for this typology principally by using an introspective questionnaire, the Relational Dimensions Instrument, which questions individuals about various aspects of their marital life. Though Fitzpatrick's introspective method is very different from the method of this study, her typology is widely accepted and well established in the field of marital communication. It has also been used as the basis for several other studies (see Sillars, Pike, Jones & Redmond 1983) thus it deserves to also be considered here. In the following chapter Fitzpatrick's three marriage types are introduced and their orientations to conflict examined.

4.4.1 Three Ways of Communicating in a Marriage

The Relational Dimensions Instrument measures an individual's position in relation to three dimensions: *interdependence*, reflecting the amount of dependence versus autonomy in a relationship; ideology, dealing with the values, standards and beliefs that an individual possesses concerning relationships; and *conflict*, which describes a partner's willingness to engage in conflict and his or her level of assertiveness. When the dimensions are joined together, three different orientations to relationships arise: traditional, independent and separate. (Fitzpatrick 1988c:99-101.)

Traditionals hold a conventional ideology about marriage. They emphasise stability in relationships, even at the cost of spontaneity. Traditionals value their community's

customs and are likely to strongly oppose infidelity. They also hold very conventional ideas about male and female gender roles and see their own behaviour as matching culturally held stereotypes for appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour. In the interdependence dimension they score high on interdependence. Traditionals also report a lot of companionship and sharing in their relationship. Their time and space is arranged accordingly; partners work out a standard time schedule together and, at home, they are unlikely to have separate rooms for themselves. Traditional couples are also highly emotionally expressive in their intimate relationship; they disclose both joy and frustration. (Fitzpatrick 1988a:79; 1988c:103-105.)

Independents, the second relational type, hold relatively unconventional beliefs about relationships; they emphasise the freedom of the individual, also in marriage. They have liberal sex role orientations and less consensus about how marital life is to be arranged. The relationship of independents is being constantly renegotiated. The independents too have a high level of companionship and sharing in their marriage, but this is manifested differently form the traditionals. An independent attempts to stay psychologically close to his or her spouse, but also maintains a separate physical space at home, in order to control accessibility. Independents spend time together, but they do not maintain a regular daily schedule. Independents see themselves as expressive, but are less likely than traditionals to express positive feelings to their spouses. (Fitzpatrick 1988a:76; 1988c:103-105.)

The third relational type, *separates,* hold two simultaneously opposing ideological views about relationships. They value individual freedom over interdependence, but believe in traditional values in marriage and family issues, and hold conventional sex role orientations. This results in ambivalence about their relational values and may cause separates to express one view of the relationship publicly, while believing in an entirely different view privately. Separates have less sharing and companionship in their relationship than the two other types, and they avoid open expressions of feelings and opinions. They attempt to keep both psychological and spatial distance in the relationship. The main way separates communicate interdependence is by keeping a regular daily schedule. Separates are not very expressive, nor do they disclose much in their relationship; they tend to disclose more to their friends than to their spouse. (Fitzpatrick 1988a:76; 1988c:104-105; 1994:277.)

Fitzpatrick (1988c:101-102) has compared the relational types of the fifteen hundred American husbands and wives who filled in the questionnaire. She found that in 60 percent of the couples being questioned, both spouses agreed on the definition of their marriage. These couples were called pure marriage types: traditionals, independents and separates. In 40 percent of the couples the spouses' orientation of their relationships differed; e.g. the wife was traditional and the husband separate. These couples were referred to as being mixed marriage types.

Fitzpatrick (1994:277-278, 285) suggests that the three orientations to marriage present cognitive schemas that guide the partners interpretation, attentiveness, and responses to each other. In mixed marriage types, partners have different schemas for marital communication; they encode and decode one another's communication differently and pay attention to different aspects of communication. In a way, this is what the above-mentioned theories about gender in communication suggest that most couples do anyway, because of their socialisation into different gender-cultures.

The Relational Dimensions Instrument (Fiztpatrick 1988a: 259-262) poses some problems for Fitzpatrick's typology. This questionnaire consists of 77 statements to which subjects show agreement or disagreement on a seven-point scale. The questionnaire includes statements like the following:

58) It is important for a couple (or a family) to attend church (synagogue) and, when possible to attend together.

This particular statement illustrates very nicely the cultural limitations of this questionnaire. The question is most likely designed to measure traditional values, and in mainstream American middle-class society, where churchgoing is a common activity, it is likely to, more or less, do so. However, this same question seems totally irrelevant when measuring a couple's relational culture, for example, in Finland. Only a small group of Finns attend church regularly, and this group is unlikely to be very homogenous. In the case of people who are not Christians or Jews, also found in the United States, this question becomes simply ridiculous. This one statement indicates a larger problem in the questionnaire – it seems to be designed for one part of the American population and this makes the results obtained unlikely to be interculturally valid.

There are also other problems with Fitzpatrick's questionnaire. It includes statements that suggest a certain answer, like:

16) We feel a need to resolve the disagreements or oppositions that arise between us.

Indeed, who would not? The questionnaire also contains statements whose ability to measure anything relevant to the study can be doubted. For example:

6) My spouse/mate has taken vacations without me (even if only for a day or two).
12) We go to bed at different times.

Surely there can be several practical reasons not connected to relational culture, which may make people answer these questions negatively or positively. This kind of information is hardly sufficient for making deductions about a couple's cognitive schemas. Since the validity of Fitzpatrick's questionnaire is doubtful, and her typology is based solely on this questionnaire, also her couple types need to be considered with reservations.

4.4.2 Marriage Types in Conflict

Each couple type has its own way of dealing with conflict in a relationship. According to Fitzpatrick's (1988b:248, 267-268) analysis of couples' conversations traditionals tend to cooperate and not confront each other. They also used fewer avoidance messages than the other couples. Traditionals were found to argue mainly about issues of significance; the argument is focused on the content of the discussion. The conflict behaviour of traditionals is explained by their relatively fixed and well-defined roles in the marriage. When the partners behave according to the role of traditional wife or husband, there is little need to negotiate and fewer conflicts arise. The danger in a marriage of traditionals is that partners may ignore some problems labelling them insignificant instead of dealing with them.

There exists quite a lot of conflict and bargaining in the relationship of independents. This is due to a high amount of change and negotiation in their relationship, as well as their high regard for independence and autonomy. This couple type uses a lot of subtle avoidance strategies, which include joking, intellectualising, and analysing the process of communication, instead of the content of the discussion itself. Regarding

interpersonal control, independents tend to continuously compete over the right to define the relationship. This is shown through a large amount of competitive symmetry in their utterances. In this aspect, the independents resemble mixed couple types, who, with their different orientations, also struggle over the relationship definition. (Fitzpatrick 1988b:249, 267- 268.)

The separates want to maintain harmony in the relationship, at least on the surface. This shows in the complementarity of their utterances; separates very rarely openly challenge one another. According to Fitzpatrick (1988b:268), separates avoid openly discussing conflict issues and tend to withdraw if one spouse brings up a stressful topic. Fitzpatrick (1988b:268) goes as far as describing separates as being "emotionally divorced." In separate marriages, traditional gender-role expectations are combined with a lack of interdependence and close emotional ties. Consequently, separates are more likely than the other couple types to over-attribute the causes of their spouse's behaviour to gender role stereotypes, e.g. "that is just what you can expect from a man." (Fitzpatrick 1988b: 268-269.)

This chapter has examined two different ways of approaching conflict behaviour in intimate relationships. It started with the idea of masculine and feminine communication cultures influencing the way women and men learn to communicate and interpret communication. As expressed by Tannen (1994), this approach suggests that,

> "Repeated interaction does not necessarily lead to a better understanding. On the contrary it may reinforce mistaken judgements of the other's intentions and increase expectations that the other may behave as before" (p.180).

This is an idea often found to be true in the field of intercultural communication. However, factors other than gender can be argued to be significant for interaction in intimate relationships. Fitzpatrick maintains that the attitudes and beliefs that a couple holds is what determines the interaction of partners in a relationship; "it is couple type and not the sex of the speaker that accounts for differential use of these [conflict management] tactics" (Fitzpatrick 1988a:146). However, Fitzpatrick does not go on to investigate where these orientations to married life rise. Both the 'gender as culture' approach, and 'relational culture' approach are likely to be useful in studying intimate relationships. This study will show whether they will apply to a Finnish television drama serial.

5 TELEVISION AS THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

5.1 Televisual Elements and Genres on Television

As well as the social and situational contexts of Finnish communication culture, e.g. interpersonal communication, communication in intimate relationships, and communicating in conflict situations, the medium of communication, television, also forms a context in this study. This approach, regarding the medium as a context of communication, is commonly used in media research (Isotalus 1996:171). The concept of context can be defined in several ways depending on the theoretical frame one chooses to apply (see Hall 1997). Spitzberg and Brunner (1991:29) state that in the field of communication, context provides a basis of expectations about social interactions. These expectations or schemata help us organise information, determine the things that are contextually appropriate and predict, for example, strategy payoffs in communication. The definitions of context do often resemble the way the concept of culture is defined (Pörhölä, Sallinen & Isotalus 1997:427). One may suggest that culture always forms a context of communication, but the concept of context does not necessarily entail culture. This chapter discusses television as the context of this study.

All interpersonal communication portrayed on *Kotikatu* is mediated by television. Television as the medium has characteristics that are typical of the way it communicates images and sounds to us. Sometimes it is even argued that television as a medium makes all its programmes become similar, and the division of programmes to fictional and nonfictional has become nonsignificant (Hietala 1991:7). The features that characterise television communication are often called *televisual* elements. In the following paragraphs these elements are discussed based on the grouping created by Isotalus (1996:20-25). Some of these elements are connected to the technical characteristics of television broadcasting, some are formed by the medium's position and function in the society. There seems to exist globally valid characteristics of television communication, such as some programme types and forms of news (Pörhölä, Sallinen & Isotalus 1997:433). However, European news programmes have also been found to reflect national culture (Heinderyckx

1993). For example, there exist differences between Finnish and American television news (Levo-Henriksson 1994).

Television is a mass medium that seeks to address large audiences. The communication of television is always *public* and usually *one-way*, though lately different "interactive" programmes where the audience may communicate with the people on the screen have become popular. Television programmes attempt to raise the interest of viewers, as well as maintain it and this affects both the form and content of programmes. (Isotalus 1996:20-22.) For example, *Kotikatu* follows the form of a *serial*, as opposed to *series*, because the story continues from one episode to another, instead of every episode telling a separate story. This kind of form creates an illusion that the characters continue to exist outside the programme; they seem go on living even when they are not being watched (Glaessner 1990:118; Virta 1994:12).

Next, television is an *entertainment* medium (Altheide & Snow 1979). It has been argued that television is becoming increasingly more entertaining. As well, the more informative-type programmes have started to include more and more elements such as visual variance and fast pace, which conform to the entertaining nature of television. (Isotalus 1996:23.) In addition, television is a *dramatic* medium; it emphasises visuality, main characters, and controversies (Leiwo 1995). Also *affective elements* gain importance, sometimes even at the cost of cognitive processing (Sallinen-Kuparinen 1987:124). The last two features of television are also an inherent part of drama. Another characteristic of television is that it strives to establish an image of *authenticity* (Altheide & Snow 1979). In the case of *Kotikatu* this refers to a feature common in soap operas: the time in the serial parallels actual time, so the events seem to take place contemporarily (Virta 1994:17; Cathcart 1986:212).

Television is also often regarded as a *reliable*, and *intimate* medium (Goodwin 1990:42). Intimacy is connected with television even though it is a mass medium. This is based on television's way or portraying people; the characters are filmed at close distances, sometimes in close-ups causing the screen to contain the entire face of a character. This gives the impression that the characters are at a conversational

distance, or even closer to the viewer, and the characters reactions and facial expressions are readily available to be interpreted. Meyrowitz (1985) has stated that *"on television expressions usually dominate words"* (p.103). The way words are delivered often carries more information than the actual words themselves. Adding to the intimate character of television, is the fact the characters on *Kotikatu* are seen in intimate setting, discussing intimate emotional issues. Viewers are able to feel that, in some way, they are participating in the characters private life. Television is also often viewed at home, and with family members. This forms an intimate environment for the viewer (Hellweg, Pfau & Brydon 1992:74-75).

Genre theory has its roots in the study of literature and film also to the study of television programmes during the 70's. However, in television, genres cannot be defined as clearly as in literature or cinema. (Hietala 1997:173.) Nowadays, television genres are often mixed; elements of different genres are included in one single programme. This is called *interterxtuality* (Fiske 1987:111-112; Isotalus 1997:26) and appears, for example, in the mixing of news and entertainment in the internationally popular programme formats, airing on Finnish television under the tittles of *Iltalypsy* and *Uutisvuoto*.

Genre refers to both the structures of the production of a programme, as well as to the frame of reference the viewer uses in interpreting the events of a programme (Isotalus 1996:25). Genres guide viewers expectations and hypothesis about what they are going to see, and provide them with means of recognising and explaining the actions that are taking place on television (Neale 1990:46). For example, one does not expect to be exposed to graphic violence when watching a Finnish family drama serial. The three television genres studied most thoroughly are situation comedies, soap operas, and news (Hietala 1997:174). From these genres, soap operas are the best suited for this study, since *Kotikatu* has a lot in common with this genre.

Even though the borders of the soap opera genre are only vaguely defined and several sub-groups of soap opera do exist (Hietala 1992:31-32), quite a lot is known about the conventions of this genre. Soap Operas are serials. They have several main characters and contain multiple interlocking narratives or plotlines that progress side by side. The story of a soap opera differs from traditional drama, which has a

beginning, a middle, and an end. Soap operas have an infinitely extended middle part that contains several "mini-climaxes"; the status quo never prevails, when one set of problems is resolved new problems arise. (Fiske 1990:180-183.)

Like real life, characters in soaps have history. Soap operas depict people with a past that viewers share and understand, and awareness of this past gives a viewer the pleasure of anticipating the way a character will react. Open end is also a typical feature of soap operas; in theory it enables the programme to go on forever. (Glaessner 1990:118-119.) The above mentioned features of the soap opera genre can also be found in *Kotikatu*. For example, the last episode of spring 1999 ends when one of the characters tells her pregnant girlfriend that he is HIV-positive. This is a psychological "cliffhanger" (Virta 1994:14), the use of which is standard in soap opera; it makes the viewer want to watch also the next episode by placing one of the characters (the girlfriend) in an emotionally controversial situation. Regarding the development of the story this may also be considered a mini-climax that gives one of the narratives a new turn to which several characters will need to react in episodes to come.

On the other hand, *Kotikatu* differs from the characteristics of American prime-time soap operas like *Dallas* or *Peyton Place* listed by Virta (1991:16-18). It does not depict the life of the rich and famous, instead most of the characters represent different levels of the Finnish middle class. Nor is the style of acting very melodramatic or exaggerated. In this respect *Kotikatu* is closer to the serials of social realism, which originated in Britain. These serials, including *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street*, depict the life of British working class families in a realistic manner (Hietala 1992:32). However, the way viewers understand realism in these soaps does not necessarily mean that the story is closely comparable to real life events. When the viewers experience settings and situations in the serial as familiar, and feel that the story could happen to normal people, they view the programme as realistic, even if critics find it empirically impossible. (Virta 1991:39; Ruoho 1997:181.) Also, while the events in the story might be stretching the limits of what is possible, a serial may be emotionally realistic; it is often enough that viewers are able to understand the emotional reactions and morals of the characters (Ang 1985). This is the case with popular daytime soaps like *The Bold and The Beautiful*.

The relationship that different genres have with reality has been explained through the concept of *verisimilitude* (Neale 1990:46). This concept derived from the French word 'vraisemblance' that means 'probable' or 'likely' and refers to what is appropriate and therefore probable. There are two types of verisimilitude that can be applied to representations, including television programmes: generic verisimilitude, which refers to conforming to the rules of the genre; and social, or cultural verisimilitude. Cultural verisimilitude refers to the programme's relation with reality, not objective reality, but what is commonly thought to be real. Some genres appeal to this kind of verisimilitude more than others. (Neale 1990:46-47.) It is cultural verisimilitude that people are talking about when they find a serial 'realistic'. As mentioned before, the style of *Kotikatu* can be argued to score high on this kind of verisimilitude. In relation to the present study this would mean that *Kotikatu*'s representation of intimate relationships, and the conflicts that occur in them, is close to what Finns *think* is representative of a middle class urban environment. The real life mother of the actor playing the role of Pertti in the serial provided us with proof of this, when answering to a journalist's question of her son's that he is really quite like the character he plays in *Kotikatu* (Mukka 1999:18). Whether Finnish men and women actually behave similarly to the characters in this serial is not known. What is important in terms of verisimilitude or 'realism' is that viewers think that they might; the story feels true to us. Thus, the results of this study will describe the behaviour of characters often accepted as 'probable' or 'likely' in the Finnish society, and this makes the results culturally interesting.

5.2 Conflicts and Intimate Relationships on Television

Generally, very little research has focused on the presentations of interpersonal conflicts on television programmes (Brinson & Winn 1997:29). This chapter will discuss some recent findings on the portrayal of conflicts and power on television. Honeycutt, Wellman and Larson (1997) have studied verbal influence and dominance in the family interactions of five episodes of *The Cosby Show*. They emphasise measuring influence as patterns of behaviour instead of mere frequency counts of e.g. interruptions, and have operationalised dominance as a situation in

which "*dominant individual's preceding behaviors elicit a predictable response from someone else but not the inverse*" (Honeycutt, Wellman & Larson 1997:40). They found that in *The Cosby Show* the members of the family did not, in general, communicate *with* each other; when they spoke to each other, each member of the family engaged in sequential monologues, "*socio-egocentric speech*" (Honeycutt, Wellman & Larson 1997:54). There was little mutual influence between the characters; the predominant pattern was no influence. This means that the characters did not appear to actively listen to, or respond to each other, nor did they seem to process what others have said. The authors suggest that these results might be partly due to the genre of situation comedy, which uses talk that needs to have a "punch line", and recommended studying whether socio-egocentric speech transcends the borders of genres.

In the above mentioned study the quantity of talk was not related to influence. Although the father of the family talked the most, he was not the most influential person in the episodes. Larson (1993) found that the parents of the television families such as *the Huxtables* and *the Simpsons* expressed a lot of conflictual behaviour towards each other and, at the same time, avoided using problem-solving strategies. For future research, the authors of these studies call for the triangulation of theories from interpersonal and mass communication (Honeycutt, Wellman & Larson 1997:54).

Skill and Wallace (1990) have studied the communicative power between family members in 21 episodes drawn from 18 different American primetime television programmes. They found that generally, American television families engaged in more positive than negative communication. Regarding married couples, husbands utilised expert power most often as their strategy of influence. In intact families, husbands were also most likely to engage in rejection acts. The wives also used a fair amount of rejection acts. When employing power, wives tended to utilise reward and expert power. This study was based on frequency counts of each type of act so interaction patterns could not be detected.

Comstock and Strzyzewski (1990) studied conflict and jealousy in 41 American primetime television programmes. They found that female characters in all

programme types engaged in more conflict behaviour than their male counterparts. Wives tended to initiate conflicts using distributive strategies, and husbands responded with avoidance or integrative tactics. When husbands initiated conflicts, they tended to use distributive strategies and receive integrative responses from their wives. Thus, the conflicts initiated by wives were most often portrayed as antisocial, while husbands initiated mostly prosocial conflicts, which, through the integrative strategy choices of wives, ended in constructive outcomes. These results reflect patterns commonly found in studies of real-life conflicts discussed in the previous chapter.

Decades of research on gender construction on television programmes has documented a stereotypical gender portrait of women (see Greenberg, Richards & Henderson 1988; Collins 1997:111). Brinson and Winn (1997) have studied gender in the interpersonal conflicts of American daytime television talk shows. In their content analysis of forty daytime talk shows they found that women and men manifested very similar behaviours in the arguments of talk shows. Men and women were more likely to engage in arguments with each other than in same-sex dyads. Both genders used cessation of eye contact as a sign of wanting to end an argument. In mixed-sex dyads women were more likely to dominate the argument, but neither sex was very likely to engage in conflict resolution. The authors suggest that the format of talk shows guides the behaviour of guests. They conclude that "daytime talk shows represent another battlefield in the war between the sexes" (Brinson & Winn 1997:36).

5.3 Television, its Viewers and Social Reality

Social learning theory (Bandura 1977) has been used to explain the effects of television characters on viewers. As Honeycutt, Wellman & Larson (1997) state,

> "According to social learning theory, television is a tool through which individuals construct social reality either positively or negatively. In addition, media portrayals are sources for expectations about the development, maintenance and deterioration of personal relationships as well as influencing real family interactions." (p. 40)

The idea is that communication patterns on television represent models of communication for the viewers. Social learning theory has provoked interest in

content analysis of the communication of television families, for example (Honeycutt, Wellman & Larson 1997; Skill & Wallace 1990). A similar view is expressed by the *models theory* (Shore 1998), which derives from cultural anthropology as well as cognitive psychology and attempts to bridge two usually separate areas of study: television production and audience reception. This theory sees media productions as cultural models that are significant in people's everyday lives. All cultural models, however, are seen as twofold; on one hand, they refer to shared social institutions, public artefacts, and, on the other hand, to an individual's personal cognitive representations, 'mental models'. In terms of media research, models theory suggest that the study of meaning in media requires a double analysis. Media productions are seen as semiotic objects, which tend to motivate certain kinds of interpretations. However, each viewer possesses a different mind that interprets these objects. Thus understanding the interaction between television and its audience calls for the study of both programme content and the way the audience in a particular context chooses to interpret this content. The present study concentrates on the first of these tasks.

Cultivation analysis (Gerbner & Cross 1976) is one of the best known theories about television's influence on the perceptions of social reality. This theory has established a connection between the amount of daily time people spend watching television and the way they perceive social reality. The theory's original concern was television violence: television was, and is, considered to offer us an image of a "mean world" where crimes are common and one is not able to trust people. Heavy television viewers have been reported to adopt this worldview more often than light television viewers. Television programmes are also found to cultivate stereotypical gender role expectations in viewers. (Morgan & Signorielli 1990:15-19; Gerbner, Cross, Morgan & Signorielli 1980, 1986.)

Lately researchers like Shapiro and Lang (1991) have also offered cognitive explanations for the cultivation effect. According to this view people generally evaluate their own experiences as being more significant than television messages when constructing a view of social reality. But if direct experience is lacking or ambiguous, social perceptions are formed and reinforced by lower-order influences, such as television messages. Thus, even though direct experience may be an

individual's primary source of information about relational interaction, such information is supplemented by observing the interactions of television characters.

Viewers make use of information gathered through viewing television drama, particularly when the situations they experience are similar to those enacted by the television characters (Hawkins & Pingree 1990:39). In such cases, the behaviour of the television characters may serve as 'advice' and increase a viewer's repertoire of available behaviours. Moreover, television exposes viewers to much behaviour which would otherwise not be observed, or may be observed very rarely. (Shapiro & Lang 1991; Gerbner & al. 1986.) Portrayals of this kind of behaviour provide opportunities for viewers to learn about the possible private emotions and motivations behind the characters. This depiction gives us an opportunity to increase our understanding of another's perspective, and the ability to predict how others may behave in similar real-life situations. Such observations of the characters' television behaviour have potential for impact on interpersonal interaction. Situation comedies and family dramas may have a greater chance to affect viewers in this way since their narratives often reflect common relational experiences (Comstock & Strzyzewski 1990:265.)

Höijer (1998:78-80) has examined the way Swedes relate to news, American primetime soap operas, and a Swedish drama serial of the social realistic genre. She argues that the quality of people's involvement to these programmes differs, even within fiction serials. While, for example, Dallas was interpreted as being a fabrication with very little relation to reality, the involvement with the social realistic genre was different. In this serial the characters were perceived as socio-culturally believable and their actions were interpreted in the light of everyday social knowledge. Viewers also generalised from the programme back to reality. Höijer (1998) suggests that social realistic fiction may serve a mediating function for viewers:

> "The narrative may mediate between the individual and the cultural identity of the viewer, and work on the personal dilemma of uniting these contradictory identities." (p. 80).

The phenomenon of *parasocial relationships* (Horton & Wohl 1956) provides more proof that viewers are able to relate to television characters as though they are real.

This supports the idea presented before that the behaviour of these characters may also function as a prescriptive model for viewers in their own interpersonal relationships. Parasocial relationship refers to the relationship an individual may have with a media character he or she feels exceptionally close to. Rubin and McHugh (1987) define parasocial relationships as *"one-sided interpersonal relationships that television viewers establish with media characters"*(p.280).

In parasocial relationships viewers feel they have come to know a particular television character; they know the personality and, to some degree, the life of the chosen media figure, whether it be the life of a fictional television drama character or a liked news anchor. The viewers form an affective, friendship-like relationship to the media character and they empathise with this media figure. (Isotalus & Valo 1995:64-65.) In many ways the development of a parasocial relationship resembles the development of an interpersonal relationship. For example, the relationship is formed through repeated "interaction" over time (Rubin & McHugh 1987). Factors facilitating the development of this relationship with television characters include the events of the programme being perceived as realistic, familiar and intimate by the viewer (Rubin & Perse 1987). By these standards it seems likely that *Kotikatu* is a popular source of parasocial interaction on Finnish television. The serial has passed its 100th episode a long time ago, the characters are well known and the programme deals with intimate family issues that many Finns are able to relate to. It is important to note that parasocial relationships are not rare or exceptional (Isotalus & Valo 1995:65), nor are they experienced exclusively by lonely people (Cohen 1997:519).

Cohen (1997) found that among dating couples of diverse ethnic backgrounds, the engagement in parasocial relationships was parallel to some findings of gender research in interpersonal relationships. He argues that gender differences in parasocial relationships are similar to those in interpersonal relationships: they function as more of a relational experience for women and instrumental experience for men. According to Cohen (1997) dating women used parasocial relationships as complementary to their stable and secure romantic relationships, while men used these symbolic relationships to compensate attachment anxiety in their personal relationship. Even if one does no agree with Cohen's somewhat crude simplification of gender differences in interpersonal relationships his suggestion that there exists

socio-cognitive similarity between interpersonal and symbolic relationships is interesting.

In another study examining the use of parasocial relationships amongst viewers, Collins (1997) has studied the letters viewers send to American situation comedy Murphy Brown. She emphasises the importance of the parasocial relationship with the strong and independent female character of Murphy Brown in validating the viewers' own lives and aspirations. This character was seen as being an exception to the stereotypical images usually portrayed about women on television (see Collins 1997:111; Brinson & Winn 1997:29) The viewers felt that Murphy Brown validated an alternative construction of meaning related to gender and this alternative was personally important to them (Collins 1997:127). Collins' study brings to mind that fictional television also naturally has an agenda setting power and this may be related to the popularity of serials like *Kotikatu*. For example, viewers may feel their own marital problems gain validity if the characters of *Kotikatu* struggle with same kinds of issues. Here lies also the danger of gender stereotyping on television. A programme like *Kotikatu* may function to convince viewers that men are just unable to speak about emotions, or that women are overemotional, especially if this attitude has already gained some support through the personal experiences of viewers.

6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND CONTENT

6.1 Research Questions

The aim of this study is to describe how women and men argue on the Finnish television drama serial *Kotikatu*. This question is approached from the perspective of interpersonal communication by analysing conflict scenes from the serial on the basis of the following three research questions:

1. How do the characters deal with conflict situations in intimate relationships?

The first research question considers the reactions of the characters when a conflict arises. Also the attributions for the reasons of a conflict, and the way each character chooses to manage conflicts is evaluated. This question also deals with the overall development of a conflict from one scene to another: how and when do possible strategy shifts in conflict management take place, and how are the conflict situations finally resolved, if at all?

2. What kind of relational messages and control patterns of communication do the couples exhibit?

In this study power is approached through relational control. The second research question considers what kind of patterns of control and dominance can be found in the interaction of the couples on *Kotikatu*. Do some of the characters often engage in dominant/domineering behaviour? This research question also pays attention to the characters' verbal and nonverbal metacommunication, and possible manifestations of differences in punctuation. Do the characters repeatedly engage in complimentary or symmetrical interaction? What kind of messages about the relationship do they communicate?

3. To what extent do the partners display gendered communication behaviours?

The third research question examines the conduct of the characters from a gender perspective. What kind of portrayals of male and female conflict behaviour does

Kotikatu present? How consistent is the characters' behaviour with the predominantly American findings about masculine and feminine communication cultures? Can the couples of *Kotikatu* be divided into clear couple types? The third research question also re-examines the answers to the two previous research questions in terms of gender: differences or similarities in conflict management, and relational control are discussed.

These questions aim at describing the process of interpersonal conflict as it appears on the chosen television drama. Together the different aspects of gender, conflict management and relational communication are intended to give a multileveled description of how people argue on *Kotikatu*.

6.2 Methodology Employed

The method used in this study is qualitative content analysis. This method limits the study to analysing the content of the programme excluding other possibilities, such as audience research or studying the production of *Kotikatu*. Since the subject is relatively unknown, a qualitative approach offers the researcher a possibility to discover issues without having rigid pre-set categories limiting the process. Also, the aim of this study is to describe how the characters argue on *Kotikatu*, and this subject matter does not lend itself well to a purely quantitative analysis. However, frequency counts are also used to determine how popular a certain behaviour is.

Content analysis originated at the turn of the century with the quantitative analysis of newspaper articles and then moved to qualitative propaganda analysis during World War II. Towards the end of last century, this approach has been widely used (Krippendorf 1980:13-20; see Greenberg 1980). Krippendorf (1980) has defined content analysis as " *a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context*" (p.21). Context in this definition is understood as the environment from which data is gathered. Descriptive research, such as this study, is also seen as content analysis because, as Krippendorf (1980) states, *"any description entails inferences"* (p. 25). This refers to the fact that a descriptive study is meaningful only in the context of the social factors that make it significant. This

explains why this study has also devoted space to explaining the way audiences interpret television programmes. Qualitative content analysis became popular in Scandinavian mass communication research during the 1970s. Analysing the media content itself as texts, and trying to interpret media messages against broader historical social and cultural contexts are the key points of this kind of analysis. (Larsen 1991:67.)

The content analysis of this study is realised by observation and analysis of the videotaped conflict scenes of *Kotikatu*. The analysis is conducted as a case study of twenty consecutive episodes of the serial. The chosen conflict scenes were all recorded on videotape and then transcribed. Pauses, emphasis, shouting, and overlapping were all considered in the transcribing of the conflict scenes and comments about nonverbal behaviour, such as touch, proximity and tone of voice were included too. The symbols used in the transcript can be observed in attachment 1. This transcript was used as the basic research material for analysis. Direct observation from the videotape was also used to complement the transcript's description of nonverbal communication.

6.3 Research Material

Kotikatu was chosen as the television drama to be studied for several reasons. First, the plot revolves around human relationships and depicts conflicts in intimate relationships quite often, and among several couples of different generations. Second, the serial is very popular, occurring in contemporary time, and seeks to portray Finnish couples in a relatively realistic manner. It therefore it also has a fair chance of influencing the viewers' perceptions of social reality. And finally, because the conflicts on *Kotikatu* happen in quite down-to-earth Finnish marriage and dating environments, they provide a fruitful topic for study allowing the integration of interpersonal communication with media research.

The conflict scenes from *Kotikatu* were collected in the following manner. At first the research material consisted of twenty 45 minutes long videotaped episodes of *Kotikatu*; these episodes were aired on Finnish Channel One on a weekly basis

during the autumn and winter 1997. All episodes were first watched in their entirety so that a general picture about the conflicts and other events that frame them could be obtained. The episodes were then watched again, and this time scenes depicting conflicts in intimate relationships were selected, listed, and taped onto another videotape. The criterion for the selection of a conflict scene was the following: both partners had to be present at some point in the scene and the existence of a conflict had to be observable in their communication. Any scenes that had one of the partners interacting with a third party were omitted. Several scenes that were not "heated arguments" were included so that the development of the conflict could be followed. However, if the characters did not verbally or nonverbally express the existence of a conflict, the scene was not included. A total of 24 conflict scenes from 11 episodes of *Kotikatu* were transcribed; these scenes form the final research material. Together these scenes last roughly an hour; the length of a single conflict scene varies from 50 seconds to nearly three minutes. The amount of utterance exchanged varies from four to 24 per scene.

6.4 Analysis of the Material

The analysis started by selecting the conflict scenes from the whole episodes. After transcribing these scenes, the analysis continued by reading the transcript made and watching the conflict scenes from another videotape. The material was analysed by searching for thematic commonalties from the communication between the characters. The themes were defined through research questions. The conflict management strategies were identified with the help of Sillars' (1986[2]) conflict management coding scheme as shown in table 1. As well, strategies that arose from the material, but were not mentioned by Sillars (1986), were also identified and included in the analysis.

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[2] *Manual for coding interpersonal conflict* (unpublished manuscript, Departement of Communication, University of Montana) According to Littlejohn 1996.

AVOIDANCE BEHAVIORS
Denial and Equivocation:
1. *Direct denial.* Person explicitly denies a conflict is present.
2. *Implicit denial.* Statements that imply denial by providing a rationale for a denial statement, although the denial is not explicit.
3. *Evasive remark.* Failure to acknowledge or deny the presence of a conflict following a statement or inquiry about the conflict by the partner.

Topic Management:
4. *Topic shifts.* A break in the natural flow of discussion that directs the topic focus away from discussion of the issue as it applies to the immediate parties.
5. *Topic avoidance.* Statements that explicitly terminate the discussion of a conflict issue before it hat been fully discussed.

Noncommittal Remarks:
6. *Abstract remarks.* Abstract principles, generalizations, or hypothetical statements. Speaking about the issue on a high level of abstraction. No reference is made to actual state of affairs between the immediate parties.
7. *Noncommittal statements.* Statements that neither affirm nor deny the presence of a conflict and that are not evasive replies or topic shifts.
8. *Noncommittal questions.* Unfocused questions or those that rephrase the question given by the researcher.
9. *Procedural remarks.* Procedural statements that supplant discussion of the conflict.

Irrevent remarks:
10. *Joking.* Nonhostile joking that interrupts or supplements serious considerations of the issue.

COOPERATIVE BEHAVIORS
Analytic remarks:
1. *Description.* Nonevaluative, nonblaming, factual description of the nature and extent of the problem.
2. *Qualification.* Discussion explicitly limits the nature and extent of the problem by tying the issue to specific behavioral events.

1. *Disclosure.* Providing "nonobservable" information about thoughts, feelings, intentions, causes of behavior, or past experience relevant to the issue that the partner would not have the opportunity to observe.
2. *Soliciting disclosure.* Asking specifically for information concerning the other that the person himself or herself would not have the opportunity to observe (i.e.., thoughts, feelings. Intentions, causes of behavior, experiences).
3. *Soliciting criticism.* Nonhostile questions soliciting criticism of oneself.

Conciliatory Remarks:
4. *Empathy or support.* Expressing understanding, support, or acceptance of the other person or commenting on the others' positive characteristics or shared interests, goals, and compatibilities.
5. *Concessions.* Statements that express a willingness to change, show flexibility, make concessions, or consider mutually acceptable solutions to conflict.
6. *Accepting responsibility.* Statements that attribute some causality for the problem to oneself.

COMPETITIVE BEHAVIORS
Confrontative Remarks:
1. *Personal criticism.* Stating or implying a negative evaluation of the parther.
2. *Rejection.* Rejecting the partner's opinions in a way that implies personal rejecting as well as disagreement.
3. *Hostile imperatives.* Threats, demands, arguments, or other prescriptive statements that implicitly blame the partner and seek change in the partner's behavior.
4. *Hostile questioning.* Questions that fault or blame the other person.
5. *Hostile joking or sarcasm.* Joking or teasing that is used to fault the other person.
6. *Presumptive attribution.* Attributing thoughts, feelings, intentions, and causes to the partner that the partner does not acknowledge. This code is the opposite of "soliciting discourse".
7. *Denial of responsibility.* Statements that deny or minimize personal responsibility for the conflict.

Table 1. Conflict Management Coding Sceme (Sillars 1986).

For analysing relational control, all utterances in the transcript were classified as being either one-down, one-up or one-across messages through the use of the arrow signs (↓ ↑ →). This categorisation was done with the help of the control pattern examples given by Rogers-Millar and Millar (1979[3]). The examples can be seen from table 2.

Table 2. Control Pattern Examples (Rogers-Millar & Millar 1979).

1. Competitive symmetry (one-up/one-up): A: You know I want you to keep the house picked up during the day. B: I want you to help sometimes.	A: I'm so tired. What should we do? B: I can't decide. You decide.
2. Complementarity (one-down/one-up): A: Please help. I need you. B: Sure, I know	**6. Transition** (one-across/one-down): A: My dad was pretty talkative tonight. B: You're right; he sure was.
3. Transition (one-across/one-up): A: Let's compromise. B: No, my way is best.	**7. Transition** (one-up/one-across): A: I definitely think we should have more kids. B: Lots of people seem to be having kids these days.
4. Complementarity (one-up/one-down): A: Let's get out of town this weekend. B: Okay.	**8. Transition** (one-down/one across): A: Please help me, what can I do?' B: I don't kow.
5. Submissive symmetry (one-down/one-down):	**9. Neutralized symmetry** (one-across/one-across): A: The neighbour's house needs paint. B: The windows are dirty too.

For example, the following utterances have been categorised as complementary (one-down/one-up).

> P: pitäiskö meidän nyt tehdä semmonen (.) ennen kuin ruvetaan keskustelemaan avioerosta
> E: musta (.) musta se ois hyvä (.) laita siihen (.) kaikki mitä sulle tulee mieleen (.) toiseen listaan plussat ja toiseen miinukset ja laita ne vierekkäin niin sitten näkee heti kumpi niistä on pitempi

In this situation Pertti hands the control over to Eeva (one-down), who accepts this (one-up) and then gives directions to Pertti. All utterances that could not be clearly qualified as one-down or one-up messages were situated in the category of one-across statements. After the categorisation was finished, the amount of each kind of manoeuvres was counted. Possible patterns of communication were identified by

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[3] Rogers-.Millar, L. E. & F. E. Millar 1979. Domineeringness and dominance: A transactional view. *Human Communication Research* 5:238-246. According to Littlejohn 1996.

examining from the transcript what kind of manoeuvres the characters utilised in responding to one another's statements.

The character's metacommunication and nonverbal communication were also considered. Touch and its' metacommincative meaning in the communication of the characters was looked into by examining each time the characters touch from the transcript. The frequency of eye contact, differences in proximity, smiling, and kinesics were studied from the videotape.

The third research question was answered by first separating the conflict management tactics used by male and female characters from table 1. These figures were then compared and conclusions were drawn on the amount of competitive, cooperative and avoidance behaviours exhibited by women and men on *Kotikatu*. Gender differences and similarities in conflict management strategies were also compared to the ideas of gender research introduced in section 4.2.2. Motives for differences in communication were searched by examining the communication of the characters from the transcript.

Some of the typical differences between feminine and masculine communication cultures mentioned in section 4.2.2, including disclosure, metacommunication, emphasis on the relationship or independence, orientation to talk, and interruptions, were also noted by thorough reading of the transcript. Also the similarities and differences in the behaviour of the tree couples was described. Finally, the communication of the couples was examined in relation to Fiztpatrick's (1988a) couple types. Also this was done by examining the transcript and comparing it to the characteristics of the couple types introduced in section 4.4.2.

7 RESULTS

7.1 Description of Conflict Scenes

The material obtained from the 24 scenes can be separated into six specific conflicts that revolve around different topics. The shortest conflict is enacted in one scene, while the longest unfolds over ten scenes to before it if finally reconciled. This chapter will introduce the characters interacting in the scenes and describe the six conflict situations.

The main characters depicted in the research material form three couples. All these couples include members of the family Mäkimaa that, in addition to the family Luotola, are the central families of *Kotikatu*. The Mäkimaas are an upper middle-class Finnish family with three children. The parents are in their fifties. The father Pertti is a lawyer working for the Finnish Ministry of Commerce and Finance and the mother Eeva is the editor-in-chief of a small local newspaper. Other couples include their son Janne, a student of theology who is about to join a small new media company, and his wife Pirkko who works as a hairdresser. Pirkko is of African origin, she was adopted by a Finnish family as a child. Janne and Pirkko are in their twenties and have a small apartment of their own. The third couple is formed by Mirja, one of the daughters of the Mäkimaa family, and her boyfriend Hessu, who is a part of the Luotola family. Mirja and Hessu are teenagers and live with their families.

From the 24 conflict scenes, 11 take place between Pertti and Eeva and they depict the development of two conflicts. Ten scenes show case the disagreements of Pirkko and Janne and these can be divided into three separate conflicts. Tree scenes depict the interaction of the single conflict that takes place between Mirja and Hessu.

The first conflict is an argument between Pirkko and Janne which takes place in their apartment. Janne has refused to take care of a dog that Pirkko's friend has found. Pirkko disapproves of Janne's behaviour and accuses him of being selfish. Janne instead argues that he has no time to watch a stranger's dog; he is too busy with the new media firm he will buy a part of. Pertti drops by to see his son, but the

atmosphere in the apartment stays tense. Later the conflict is resolved when Janne apologises for his behaviour.

The second conflict takes place in Eeva and Pertti's home before leaving for work in the morning. Pertti is having breakfast prior to travelling to Brussels on a work engagement, while Eeva walks into Mirja's empty room and finds a singlepacked condom on the floor. Eeva brings the preservative to the kitchen and places it on Pertti's breakfast plate. When Pertti finds out where the condom was found he gets very upset and demands to know whether Eeva has talked with Mirja about sex. From this point, the conflict escalates very quickly. Eeva answers that she indeed has talked with Mirja, unlike Pertti who has never discussed these things with any of their children. Pertti complains that Eeva is once again accusing him of being narrow minded and reserved, and insists that if she will not talk to Mirja about this, then he will do it. Pertti also claims that Eeva thinks that it is all right for ten-year-old children to have sex with whomever they please. Eeva answers that Mirja is not ten years old and would not have sex casually. Pertti complains that lately, whenever they talk, Eeva's attitude towards him is hostile. Eeva leaves for work and this conflict never gets properly resolved.

The third conflict starts in a cafe when Hessu finds out that Mirja has told her friend Anu about his reluctance to have sex for the first time. Hessu blames Mirja for disclosing confidential information about their relationship to an outsider, to which Mirja replies with an apology. Anu, who is also present in this scene, is making things worse by behaving provocatively towards Hessu. Hessu does not accept Mirja's apology and leaves the cafe. Later Mirja and Hessu meet outside their house, where Mirja asks whether he is still angry. Hessu denies his anger, but his actions reveal the opposite. In the next scene Mirja helps Hannes, the father of the Luotola family to go home since he is very drunk. Hessu then comes home and finds Mirja attending to Hannes. They do not mention the conflict again, Hessu is no longer angry and at the end of the scene, he kisses Mirja.

The fourth conflict happens when Mirja and Hessu have found naked pictures of Pirkko on the Internet, and showed them to Janne. In the first scene Janne comes home where viewers see Pirkko on the phone, crying and talking in Swedish. When

Janne asks what is going on Pirkko reveals that her ex-boyfriend from Göteborg has put the photos of her in the Internet. She had dated this man when she lived with her biological father in Sweden. Janne did not know about Pirkko's biological father or the ex-boyfriend, and gets angry because his wife has not told him about these events. Pirkko replies that those times belong in the past, and they are not significant for the present or future. Janne states that Pirkko's biological father cannot just be part of the past. Pirkko replies that Janne does not understand anything. Janne makes a remark about the kind of boyfriends Pirkko has had, and prepares to leave. Pirkko asks him to stay and help clear things out, but Janne instead walks out of the apartment leaving a crying Pirkko behind.

Later Janne comes home and sits down by the computer. When Pirkko asks him what is going on, he tells her that he has phoned the server in Göterborg and they have promised remove the photos. Pirkko is glad and reaches out to Janne, but Janne reminds Pirkko that anybody could have copied the photos. The last scene of the conflict shows Janne and Pirkko going to bed and Pirkko saying that although the photo-incident was terrible, it is nothing compared to what they share together. They agree that the conflict is resolved.

The fifth conflict is the longest of the material collected for this study. It revolves around the marriage crisis of the Mäkimaas that begins when Eeva tells Pertti that she has committed adultery. This argument lasts for ten scenes. As a first reaction to Eeva's announcement, Pertti hits her on the cheek and walks out of the apartment. Later, when Pertti comes back, he apologises for his behaviour. After has forgiven him Pertti announces that he does not want to discuss what has happened. Eeva requests to know when they are going to talk. Pertti answers that there is nothing to talk about and Eeva decides to sleep in the guest bedroom.

From here on the same pattern is repeated in several scenes. Eeva becomes more and more angry because Pertti refuses to discuss her infidelity and the problems in their marriage. Finally, the situation starts to improve at Christmas Eve, when Mirja refuses to eat dinner with her parents because she finds the atmosphere in the family intolerable. Later Pertti apologises for his behaviour and Eeva goes away for a few days.

When Eeva returns she and Pertti finally talk about the extramarital relationships they both have had and discuss the state of their marriage. Eeva suggests that before they consider divorce they should make a list of the pros and cons of their marriage and then see which list is longer. In the last scene of the conflict Pertti and Eeva are comparing their lists and Pertti's list shows as many plusses as minuses. Eeva says that her list indicates on positive point more, and that point is her love for Pertti. Pertti replies that he somehow he just was not able to put that sentence in writing. The conflict is resolved.

The sixth conflict occurs between Janne and Pirkko who have moved into a new and bigger apartment. Pirkko suggests that she would stop taking the contraceptive pill so they could have a child. Janne is puzzled by the suggestion and says he is not yet ready to have a child. Pirkko is not happy with Janne's answer and the next morning she brings him breakfast in bed and asks whether he has reconsidered the baby-issue. Janne answers that he has already expressed how he feels but Pirkko insists that there is no reason for them to not have a child. Janne asks that Pirkko respect his opinion in this matter, but Pirkko leaves the bed. In the next scene Pirkko wakes Janne up and Janne suggests that they spend the day together and not go to work. Pirkko answers that she cannot do that and Janne asks whether she is angry about something, Pirkko denies being angry and leaves for work. When Janne gets up he finds a used pregnancy test in the wastebasket. The results are negative and Pirkko is not pregnant.

When Pirkko comes home she apologises for being in a bad mood that morning. Janne is angry and asks why Pirkko took a pregnancy test. Pirkko reveals that she has stopped taking the pill and later apologises for this. Janne takes his coat and walks out of the apartment. As Pirkko is leaving for work the next morning she tells Janne that she will have a new prescription for the contraceptive pill filled in. By this time other things have influenced Janne's opinion about children and he is no longer sure of his previous opinion. The conflict has faded away.

7.2 The Characters' Communication in Conflict Situations

This chapter will examine the six conflicts previously introduced in light of the first research question. First, the overall development of the conflicts, how and why they begin, develop and end will be evaluated. Then, we shall examine more closely the strategies and attributions the characters on *Kotikatu* use to manage conflicts.

7.2.1 The Rise, Development and End of Conflicts

Generally the conflicts on *Kotikatu* initiate for two reasons: the partners pursue incompatible goals, or one partner does or says something that hurts the other's feelings. Two of the six conflicts in the research fall in the latter category, e.g. Janne feels hurt because Pirkko has kept her biological father and her ex-boyfriend a secret. One of the other conflicts is clearly caused by incompatible goals: Pirkko wants a child and Janne does not. The longer conflict between Eeva and Pertti has elements of both reasons as it begins when Eeva hurts Pertti by sleeping with another man, but evolves quickly to a conflict of incompatible goals when Eeva wants to sort things out by talking and Pertti refuses to talk. There also exists one conflict in the research material that seems to start without any reason. This is the conflict about the condom found in Mirja's room. The scene itself does not indicate or supply a clear explanation why this situation turns into a bitter argument soon after Eeva places the condom in her husband's plate.

> P: mitäs pilaa tää on (.) minä en todellakaan tarvitse työmatkoillani kondomeja
> ja jos mä niitä tarvitsen mä pystyn ostamaan niitä itsekin
> E: tää löyty Mirjan huoneen lattialta ((walks to the other side of the table))
> P: mitä (1) ei voi olla totta (.) ootsä ootsä puhunu Mirjan kanssa
> E: mä löysin sen just äsken joten en todellakaan ole
> P: ootsä tosissas ootsä PUHUNU MIRJAN KANSSA
> E: puhunu mistä
> P: seksistä (.) sukupuoliasioista yleensä ((Eeva laughs)) mikä sua naurattaa
> E: voi Pertti näkisit itses (.) oletko sä miesparka puhunu sukupuoliasioista
> Mirjan kanssa tai Jannen kassa se enempää
> yleisesti kuin erityisestikään ((in a vicious tone))

From this point the conflict escalates fast. But what turns this situation, as well as the other five conversations, into arguments? Pertti and Eeva might have just as well talked calmly about the condom. What were the early signs in the conversation that suggest they were not going to do that? In this case, as with the other five conflicts,

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these signs seem to be nonverbal. The first signs of a conflict are often a character's tone of voice or a nonverbal withdrawal of some sort. The verbal expression of a conflict situation seems to only come later. In the above-mentioned example, Eeva places the condom in a strange place, on Pertti's plate, without providing immediate explanation. This can already be interpreted if not aggressive, then at least a confusing act. This is definitely not a very constructive start to any conversation. However, the next utterances are not clearly hostile. Pertti's question about whether Eeva has talked to Mirja does not yet need to be interpreted as his blaming of Eeva. Eeva's answer shows a sign of irritation through her use of the word "todellakaan". Only when Pertti repeats his question and raises his voice the viewer knows that an argument is about to follow.

Let us consider another example of the way conflicts begin on *Kotikatu*. Pirkko and Janne's argument about her ex-boyfriend and the pictures on the Internet begins after Pirkko has ended her phone call to Sweden.

> J: Pirkko
> Pi: moi ((Janne and Pirkko sit by the table))
> J: mitä täällä tapahtuu
> Pi: ne kuvat on ottanu mun entinen poikaystävä Mikke (.) ((sneezes)) mä seurustelin sen kanssa kun mä asuin puol vuotta Göteborgissa mun isän luona
> J: mä luulin et sun isä asuu Tampereella
> Pi: mun biologinen isä asuu Göteborgissa ja se on idiootti
> J: oliks toi jävlans idiot se Mikke ((Pirkko nods)) no mitä se sano (.) lupasko se ottaan ne pois
> Pi: nej ((Pirkko touches Janne's hand, Janne draws his hand away))
> J: (6) mä en tienny mitään sun biologisesta isästä tai entisestä poikaystävästä ((slowly, accusingly))
> Pi: no mitä sitte
> J: me ollaan naimisissa
> Pi: ((crying)) eli
> J: ei meillä pitäs olla mitään salaisuuksia

Here again the situation turns into an argument with a combination of nonverbal cues: Janne draws his hand, takes a long break and then continues to talk in an angry tone. His refusal to be touched already sends a message that all is not well. Though the verbal content of Janne's next utterance *"mä en tienny mitään sun biologisesta isästä tai entisestä poikaystävästä"* is not hostile in itself, Janne's tone of voice makes it clear that this is an accusation. When Pirkko chooses not to acknowledge this accusation as being justified, the argument begins.

When a conflict is initiated on *Kotikatu* it is usually developed in at least one additional scene before coming to a turning point that makes resolution possible and leads to the end of an argument. The turning point can be an apology, or some other form of reconciling behaviour from one of the partners. For example, Janne and Pirkko's conflict about the pictures in the Internet ends at night when they are in bed, as Pirkko says:

Pi: se kuva on ihan kauhea asia (.) mut kuitenkin ihan sama (1) verrattua
J: mihi
Pi: et on olemassa minä ja sinä (1) me (4) tuntuuks viel pahalta
J: (2) tuntuu (1) vaik ei mä kyllä tiedä miks (1) kyl mä tajuun et tommonen on menneisyyttä (2) ja sitä paitsi itte mä oon pettäny sua sinä aikana kun me ollaan oltu yhdessä (2) ei mulla pitäs olla mitään varaa valittaa
Pi: no sithän tää asia on selvitetty eiks ni
J: sulla on historias ja mulla omani

Here Pirkko provides the turning point by putting things into perspective with acknowledging that their love is more important than the cause of this conflict. This provides a new tone for the conversation, and in the end the partners agree that the conflict is over.

However, not all conflicts in the research material are resolved as explicitly as in the previous example. The turning point can also be brought about by other people's behaviour; something outside the relationship changes a partner's mood allowing them to stop being angry with their partner. Two such cases exist. The first takes place when Mirja takes care of the drunken Hannes and puts a bandage on his bleeding hand. When Hessu comes home and is a witness to the situation he is no longer angry with Mirja and the conflict comes to an end. In the second case, Janne has to take care of a friend's child after he has argued with Pirkko about having children. After this experience he is not that sure that he no longer wants children and his anger dissolves. However, in both these conflicts an apology has also been offered making it easier to leave the argument behind.

Pirkko and Janne's conflict about having children develops at a much slower pace than other conflicts in the research material. This conflict does not begin escalating immediately after the partners have noticed that incompatible goals exist. Instead it keeps resurfacing, as with Pirkko who keeps trying to persuade Janne to change his mind in the second scene of the conflict:

Pi: mä toin sulle aamiaista
J: joo (.) no just (.) kiitos (1) miks
Pi: miten niin miks
J: no (.) eihän nyt oo mun mikään syntymäpäivä (.) tai mikään
Pi: no mä halusin yllättää sut
J: kiitos kulta
Pi: ootsä ajatellu sitä mistä me viimeks puhuttiin
J: ai sitä huonekalujen ostojuttua vai
P: no ei (.) kun sitä että (.) musta meidän pitäs (.) tehdä lapsi
J: niin no mut enks mä sanonu mikä mun kanta on

The conflict truly breaks out only in the fourth scene after Janne has found the used pregnancy test. Until then the disagreement causes Pirkko to sulk, but does not lead to much else. As an opposite example, Eeva and Pertti's argument about the condom escalates very quickly after it has started and ends in the middle of a heated argument as Eeva leaves for work and Pertti travels to Brussels. When Pertti returns they do not discuss the conflict again since other issues, and an another conflict, come up.

In conclusion, only three of the six conflicts in the research material are explicitly settled. Two fade away with the help of an outsider's influence; even though these conflicts are not verbally reconciled, one notices from the partner's behaviour that they have been settled. Finally, only one conflict in the material is not settled and is instead left behind.

7.2.2 Managing conflicts - Strategies and Attributions

When dealing with conflicts the characters on *Kotikatu* use a wide variety of competitive, cooperative and avoidance strategies. Sillars' (1986) Conflict Management Coding Scheme, presented in section 3.2.1, is used as the basis for the categorisation of the conflict management strategies. However, other strategies that arise from the material but are not mentioned in the Conflict Management Coding Scheme (Sillars 1986) are also included. This is done in order to more accurately describe the communication between the characters in the particular case of *Kotikatu*. Sillars' (1986) categories concentrate on verbal communication. Some of the other strategies are about nonverbal behaviour. In this study, nonverbal communication, at least paralanguage, is considered to be a natural part of all conflict management strategies, even when their emphasis is on the verbal aspect of communication.

Table 3. The conflict management strategies on *Kotikatu*.

CONFLICT 1	Janne	**competitive**	**rationalisation/argumentation hostile joking**
		cooperative	apology
	Pirkko	**competitive**	**personal criticism**
		cooperative	empathy/support
CONFLICT 2	Pertti	**competitive**	**hostile questioning presumptive attribution personal criticism**
	Eeva	**competitive**	**personal criticism**
CONFLICT 3	Hessu	**competitive**	**personal criticism verbal aggression**
		cooperative	empathy/support
		avoidance	*leaving*
	Mirja	cooperative	apology accepting responsiblility
		avoidance	*topic shift*
CONFLICT 4	Janne	**competitive**	**personal criticism nonverbal rejection**
		cooperative	disclosure
		avoidance	leaving
	Pirkko	**competitive**	**personal criticism rationalisation/argumentation**
		cooperative	description soliciting disclosure
CONFLICT 5	Eeva	**competitive**	**nonverbal rejection personal criticism verbal aggression**
		cooperative	disclosure forgiveness soliciting disclosure description qualification empathy/support
	Pertti	**competitive**	**personal criticism physical aggression patronising/ giving oders verbal aggression**
		cooperative	apology accepting responsibility disclosure
		avoidance	*leaving topic avoidance direct denial topic shift*
CONFLICT 6	Janne	**competitive**	**rationalisation/argumentation personal criticism hostile questioning**
		cooperative	disclosure
		avoidance	*topic shift leavinng*
	Pirkko	**competitive**	**presumptive attribution rationalisation/argumentation**
		cooperative	apology
		avoidance	*direct denial*

Table 3. shows the strategies used in each of the six conflicts. It also illustrates which strategies each character has applied. The table does not show whether a character has used a certain strategy in one or several utterances during the conflict; a strategy is mentioned only once in connection to a single character acting within one conflict. The table includes eight additions to Sillar's (1986) Conflict Management Coding Scheme. They are introduced in the following.

Three nonverbal strategies were added to Sillar's categories. First, *nonverbal rejection* has been separated as a strategy on its own. Nonverbal rejection means rejecting a partner with nonverbal cues; in the research material this is evidenced through touch or proximics. Nonverbal rejection takes place in conflicts four and five: Janne withdraws from Pirkko's touch and Eeva goes to sleep in the guest bedroom. *Verbal rejection* was defined, like Sillars' (1986) original strategy of *rejection*, as rejecting a partner's opinions in a way that also implies personal rejection. There were no clear cases of verbal rejection in the material. However, the closely related category of *personal criticism* was widely used.

Another nonverbal conflict management strategy was named *leaving*. This refers to a character withdrawing from a conflict situation and terminating the conversation by walking out, leaving an apartment, or a cafe, as is the case in conflict number three. In this study, leaving is categorised as a nonverbal avoidance strategy, though in many cases leaving also implies rejection, which is a competitive strategy. Leaving is considered a conflict management strategy only when a character leaves because of a conflict. If a conflict takes place in a situation where one or the partners were going to leave soon anyway, for example before going to work in the morning, leaving has not been counted as a strategy. Leaving is commonly used on *Kotikatu*, it takes place in four conflicts. For example, when Hessu walks out of the cafe after talking to Mirja and Anu.

> H: mä luulin et se oli sun ja mun välinen asia
> A: hei ehkä Mirjaa huvittaa puhuu jostain välillä
> H: kiito*s*
> M: ((to Anu)) et sä vois joskus pitää tota päätäs kiinni (.) Hessu mä oon
> tosi pahoillani
> H: fuck you ((Hessu gets up and walks out))

Physical aggression is the third nonverbal conflict management strategy used on *Kotikatu*. It is categorised as a competitive strategy that refers to physically assaulting one's partner. This takes place only once in the research material: Pertti hits Eeva on the cheek after she has confessed to her affair.

As well, *verbal aggression* is used in the conflicts, as can be noted from Hessu's last line in the above-mentioned example. In this study verbal aggression refers to name-calling, threats, swearing and other kinds of foul language. In the above mentioned example Hessu uses the strategies of verbal aggression and leaving. Thus, he combines a competitive strategy with avoidance. However, his choice in using a foreign language to express his act of verbal aggression makes it somewhat less offensive than if he had chosen to say the same sentence in Finnish. This highlights the fact that verbal aggression is quite rarely used in the research material. This may be largely explained by *Kotikatu* being a prime-time family serial where bad language is not part of the genre. However, the fact that the characters do not use threats seems slightly surprising as one could easily imagine threats being part of heated relationship conflicts also in television drama.

Another strategy that rises from the conflict scenes is named *rationalisation or argumentation*. This strategy refers to the situation where one partner is trying to rationalise or otherwise argue his or her point through. A good example of rationalisation is Pirkko's refusal to accept Janne's decision to not have children:

> J: niin no mut enks mä sanonu mikä mun kanta on
> P: mut kun mua pelottaa että mitä sä oikein tarkotat sillä että sä et oo
> valmis (.) jos et sä oo nyt valmis niin miten sä voisit olla
> myöhemminkään (.) vai aiotsä (.) vaihtaa mut johonki toiseen
> tyttöystävään
> J: no en aio (.) no tää nyt on vaan semmonen elämänvaihe
> P: sun työtäs vakituisempaa duunia ei saa kukaan muukaan enää
> Suomesta (.) ja jos se nyt on siitä kiinni niin me kuollaan koko
> kansakunta sukupuuttoo (.) su sul on vakituinen parisuhde ja tilava asunto

Here Pirkko attempts to turn the baby-issue into a question of Janne's commitment to her, and then into a question of material or financial well being. Pirkko is arguing her case instead of accepting Janne's right to make an emotional decision in the matter. She does not accept Janne's reasons because they are not sensible enough, as she puts

it later on. In this conflict Janne also tries to state arguments in his defence. Rationalisation or argumentation is used in three of the six conflicts in the research material.

Apologising is separated as its own strategy from the category of *accepting responsibility*. An apology implies regret, while accepting responsibility does not necessarily do so. In the conflicts of *Kotikatu*, accepting responsibility either functions as an apology, or completes an apology. Apologising is a well-established way of ending arguments, and it's interesting to observe how widely it is used in the research material. Table 3. shows that apologies are quite popular on *Kotikatu* since four of the conflicts contain apologies. However, in only two cases were the apologies immediately accepted, in other cases, they did not lead to immediate reconciliation. The strategy of responding to an apology with explicit *forgiveness*, saying that it does not matter, was surprisingly rare. This only happens once as Eeva forgives Pertti for hitting her. Somehow this does not even seem to be very significant as the conflict is to go on for a long time after this.

> E: sä oot ihan märkä sataaks siellä
> P: siellä alko just äske sataa (2) toivottavasti sä et ollu huolissas mä oli Veikon luona käymässä (3) mä oon pahoillani et mä löin sua (1) se on (.) raukkamaista ja anteeks antamatonta
> E: niin on
> P: mutta mä aion kuitenkin pyytää anteeksi
> E: (3) sä saat (.) mut Pert[ti]

Patronising or giving orders is a competitive strategy that Pertti resorts to in his marital crisis with Eeva. This strategy refers to treating one's partner condescendingly, talking down, or telling the other what to do. A good example of the use of this strategy is the scene when, one evening Mirja gets tired of her parents continuous arguing and walks out of the apartment.

> E: Mirja hei (.) mihin sä nyt meet.
> P: Maijalle tietenkin (.) tai Jannelle ja Pirkolle (.) hei (.) niinku sä huomaat niin huutaminen ei auta nyt yhtään mitään ((grabs Eeva by the shoulders)) nyt meet takasin sänkyyn.
> E: ((shakes herself free from Pertti's grip)) minä en jaksa elää tässä valheessa ((goes to the guest bedroom and closes the door))
> P: jos joku tässä talossa muuttaa aviovuoteesta toiseen huoneeseen niin se on mies eikä nainen (.) hei ovi auki ja takaisin omaan sänkyyn (.) minä muuta sinne ((shakes his finger at closed door))

Here Pertti, both verbally and nonverbally attempts to treat his wife like she was a disobedient child. His nonverbal acts, finger shaking and holding Eeva by the

shoulders are gestures are traditionally directed at children. Pertti even commands his wife to go back to bed, which certainly does not sound like a conversation between two adults. Eeva responds to this with growing anger and slamming the door at her husband's face.

As mentioned before, also several of Sillar's (1986) strategies are applied during the conflict scenes. *Personal criticism*, which refers to "stating or implying a negative evaluation of the partner" (Sillars 1986), is the most widely used competitive strategy; at least partner criticises the other in all six conflicts. This strategy is used nine times in total and, in three of the conflicts, both partners criticise each other. Criticism is directed at several things: Pirkko blames Janne for being too self-centred, Eeva says that Pertti is incapable of talking about sexual issues with their children, Hessu blames Mirja for disclosing confidential information to her friend. The only recurrent pattern is Eeva's criticism of Pertti's unwillingness to talk about sensitive issues. This first surfaces in the conflict about the condom, and later in the marital crisis, when Eeva repeatedly criticises her husband for not talking about their problems. Pertti, on the other hand, mostly refrains from criticising his wife's personality.

Rationalisation or argumentation is also quite popular in the research material as it is used four times. Another competitive strategy that has not yet been mentioned is *hostile joking*, which is used by Janne when Pirkko, his wife of African origin, is leaving for a vacation with her friend. Pertti is visiting Janne and Pirkko at the time.

> P: joo (.) ((takes his coat)) no ei sitten muuta kun tuota (.) ((takes his briefcase)) pitäkää hauskaa (.) mutta älkää liian hauskaa
> J: Pikkusen muaki kyllä pelottaa kun ne latinot on näitten vaaleitten skandinaavien perään

Other less frequently used competitive strategies are *hostile questioning* applied by e.g. Pertti when he asks whether Eeva has talked with Mirja about sex, and *presumptive attribution*, again used by Pertti, in the same conflict when he states to his wife:

> P: sun mielestä on ilmeisesti ihan oikein ja okei että kymmenvuotiaat lapset harrastaa seksiä kenen kanssa tahansa ja missä tahansa

Pirkko also applies this strategy when she is trying to convince Janne that they should have a baby.

Disclosure is one of the most widely used cooperative strategies. During the conflicts people disclose by talking about their feelings. This takes place in three conflicts. One of them is Janne and Pirkko's argument that starts with the pictures on the Internet. In the example mentioned in section 7.2.1, Pirkko provides a turning point to the conflict by making a strategy shift to *qualification* and *soliciting disclosure*, to which Janne responds with disclosure.

> Pi: se kuva on ihan kauhea asia (.) mut kuitenkin ihan sama (1) verrattua
> J: mihi
> Pi: et on olemassa minä ja sinä (1) me (4) tuntuuks viel pahalta
> J: (2) tuntuu (1) vaik ei mä kyllä tiedä miks (1) kyl mä tajuun et tommonen on menneisyyttä (2) ja sitä paitsi itte mä oon pettäny sua sinä aikana kun me ollaan oltu yhdessä (2) ei mulla pitäs olla mitään varaa valittaa

Generally the turning points also involve strategy shifts form competitive or avoidance strategies to cooperative strategies. All five conflicts that are settled come to a conclusion through cooperative behaviour. For example, in Pertti and Eeva's marriage crises, Pertti makes a strategy shift from topic avoidance and direct denial to disclosure. This functions as the turning point for this conflict, and Eeva responds to it with empathy.

Empathy or support is used as a cooperative conflict management strategy three times in the material. In all of these three cases, the conflict has previously reached its turning point with an apology, disclosure, or an outsider's influence. For example, in the first conflict Pirkko shifts her strategy from personal criticism to empathy immediately after Janne has apologised for his behaviour. Thus, in the research material empathy can be considered a strategy that the characters can afford to use after their partner has started to behave in a reconciling manner.

The strategy of *qualification* is used once in the six conflicts. Eeva applies it when the Mäkimaa's finally start talking about the extra-marital affairs they both have had.

> P: sä sanot mulle kylmän rauhallisesti että sä olit miehen luona mutta MITÄÄN EI TAPAHTUNUT
> E: Pertti mustasukkaisuus nyt on kaikkein alkeellisinta ja naurettavinta tässä tilanteessa (.) istu alas (.) sun vuoro
> P: se on ohi
> E: hyvä (.) koska se alko

Eeva limits the conversation quite strictly to the events that have happened. She does not let allow her husband to have jealous outbursts, and, in the end suggests they

both make a list indicating the advantages and disadvantages of their marriage.

Topic shift is an avoidance strategy that is utilised three times during the conflict scenes. The conflict between Mirja and Hessu provides an example of this strategy. After Hessu has walked out of the cafe, Mirja meets him in front of their house.

> M: moi ((approaches Hessu)) sä oot viel vihane
> H: ai mä vai e ((tries to pass her, but Mirja stands in front of him))
> M: sä oot oikeessa mun ei olis pitäny puhua Anulle meidän jutuista (3) ((Hessu stays quiet)) meillä oli eilen ihan mielettömät tanssitreenit mul on vieläkin lihakset ihan kipeet (1) arvaa miltä tuntuu sellanen parituntinen rääkki (1) ootsä menos kauppaan (.) voinks mä tulla mukaan

Other avoidance strategies include *direct denial* and *topic avoidance*, both used by Pertti in the marital crisis with Eeva. In this conflict, Pertti resorts to four different avoidance strategies. This is also the only conflict in which direct denial and topic avoidance are used. Pertti's determination to avoid discussing the conflict is stronger than any other character's in any other conflict. This can be noted through the following example where Pertti uses topic avoidance.

> P: [hei] mä en haluu puhua (.) mä en haluu kuulla enää mitään (.) mulla ei ole mitään kysyttävää eikä myöskään mitään sanottavaa (.) annetaan nyt olla Eeva
> E: koska me sitten puhutaan
> P: mulla nyt ei oo enää mitään puhuttavaa (.) mun puolesta tää asia on loppuunkäsitelty ((Pertti goes to take a shower))

Pirkko also resorts to direct denial when she refuses to admit that she is angry because of Janne's refusal to have a baby.

It is reasonable to presume that the manner in which the characters react to a conflict is related to who they blame for the argument. The connection between the attributions made about the cause of a conflict with the conflict management strategies chosen as suggested by Canary and Spitzberg (1990:140), is present also on *Kotikatu*. The characters are more prone to use competitive strategies when they attribute the cause of the conflict to their partner, and more likely to be cooperative when they blame themselves. However, there is no such relation between attributions and avoidance strategies, the characters may resort to avoidance strategies regardless of who they blame for the situation.

In most of the conflicts, the cause of the disagreement is made relatively clear to the viewer and the characters also appear to understand what the conflict is about. A

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good example of this is Hessu and Mirja's conflict. In this argument both partners attribute the conflict to Mirja's behaviour, and this is connected to Hessu's choice to apply a competitive conflict management strategy of personal criticism and Mirja's response with a cooperative strategy of accepting responsibility. However, this three-scene conflict is the only one in the research material where the blame is unanimously placed on one partner. In all the other conflicts the attributions being made are more complicated: either they change as the conflict develops and the partners start to see the situation in a new light, or they are simply not agreed upon. That is, both of the partners blame each other, like in Eeva's and Pertti's conflict about the condom in Mirja's room. An example of shifting attributions is the ten-scene marriage crisis between Eeva and Pertti. When the conflict begins with Eeva's confession that she has committed adultery, the cause of the conflict is attributed to her. Pertti reacts to this with physical aggression and leaving. Later, when Pertti returns, the attributions and tactics of both partners have changed. Now that it is him who has broken the rules, Pertti becomes cooperative and apologises for his behaviour. After this the situation becomes more complicated, Eeva attributes their ongoing argument to Pertti's refusal to talk things out, but Pertti's attributions are not made clear. However, in *Kotikatu* attributions about the cause of conflicts may change along with the development of the conflict process.

Generally, the characters do not have a tendency of immediately reciprocating their partner's previous strategy, like the college students did in Sillar's (1980b) study. However, there are some cases where this does happen: the characters reciprocate the strategy of personal criticism in two conflicts. One of them is Pirkko and Janne's argument about the pictures on the Internet:

> J: ei meillä pitäs olla mitään salaisuuksia
> P: no mistä kaikesta mun pitäs sulle kertoa mun ekoista menkoista mun nielurisaleikkauksista minkälaisia mekkoja mä käytin lapsena mitkä oli mun koulukavereiden nimet ala-asteella (.) ne on kaikki historiaa (.) sillä ei oo mitään merkitystä tulevaisuuden kanssa
> J: onks sun biologinen isäs historiaa
> P: sä et voi sanoa mitä mä ajattelen (.) sä et tiedä mitään etkä ymmärrä mitään

Here Pirkko replies to Janne's implied criticism with a direct counter-attack.

When all the conflict management strategies are added up, we find that the characters resort to different tactics 54 times during the conflict scenes. Competitive strategies are the most common; they are utilised 25 times. In this group of strategies personal

criticism is the most widely used one. Cooperative strategies come second, they are applied 19 times during the conflict scenes; the most frequently used cooperative strategies are apologising and disclosure. Avoidance strategies are used cosiderably less frequently that the other two groups, they are applied ten times in the research material. Leaving is the most common avoidance strategy.

7.3 Relational Patterns and Metacommunication

This chapter examines the relational aspects of the characters' communication by concentrating on relational control and metacommunication between the partners. Symmetrical and complementary communication as well as dominant and domineering behaviour are examined. Also the process of schismogenesis is considered.

When the character's utterances are categorised as one-up, one-down or one-across statements, one notes immediately that one-down statements are in minority. Under thirty of the more than 320 utterances in the material were classified as one-down statement. Asking the other person's advice, and complying with the partner's wishes were counted in this category. Also apologies were considered to be one-down statements, as they are often an act of handing over the control and stating that one's own definition of the relationship has not been correct or justified. Thus, the characters are not, in their utterances, very willing to grant control in the relationship to their partner. Considering that this study is about conflict situations, this is hardly surprising.

All the utterances that could not be classified as making a relational definition were counted as one-across messages. Many questions and answers fell into this category as did greetings and much of the characters' talk that is related to practical daily issues. There were nearly 150 one-across statements in the material. This is roughly the same amount as there were one-up statements. Orders and commands were counted as one-up messages. So were statements about the partner's character and the nature of the relationship, as well as criticism of the partner and questions that blamed the partner. Generally, all utterances that challenged the partner were counted as one-up messages. The separation between different control manoeuvres was, at times, difficult to make: when does a question define the relationship, when does it ask the other person to define it, and when is a question just a request for information?

Symmetrical interaction is widely used in the research material. When the couples are arguing they tend to develop a situation of competitive symmetry, like Pertti and

Eeva do when they find out that some of their children are not going to spend Christmas with them.

> E: se huolestuttaa mua meidän perheen asioista kaikista vähiten ollaan pienellä porukalla hissukseen se on ihan hyvä
> P: mä taas haluan et on paljon ihmisiä niinkuin aina
> E: miks (.) nii sä haluut että on paljon meteliä ikäänkuin kulissina ettei huomaa miten pahasti vinossa meidän asiat on
> P: mä en ymmärrä miten sä jaksat jankuttaa tosta samasta asiasta noin kauan (.) kaikkihan on ihan hyvin
> E: ei ole Pertti (.) mä olen pettänyt sua ja sä et halua puhua siitä
> P: no mut toikin asia on puhuttu jo tuhanteen kertaan eiks niin
> E: eikä ole

Here the Mäkimaas engage in an exchange of seven consecutive one-up messages. Both Eeva and Pertti have their own definitions about how to spend Christmas and, more importantly, what is going on in their relationship. Neither of them is willing to accept the other person's interpretation. Both Eeva and Pertti are attempting to assert control without their partner granting it to them, their behaviour is domineering, but not dominant. There are several situations like this in the research material.

In the above mentioned scene Eeva and Pertti are in the middle of the *schismogenesis* that takes place in the conflict scenes. Eeva's announcement about her infidelity develops into a situation where Eeva keeps on bringing up the problems in their marriage and Pertti keeps insisting that there is nothing to talk about. The situation builds into a symmetrical schismogenesis, where neither of the partners is willing to behave according to the wishes of the other, and Eeva's behaviour always triggers the same response from Pertti. This takes the Mäkimaas further and further away from resolving the situation.

During this conflict Eeva tries different approaches from persuasion to shouting in order to get his husband to talk, and Pertti responds to this with *stonewalling*, absolute refusal to discuss the issue. The Mäkimaas develop *a demand-withdraw interaction pattern* (Sagrestano, Heavey and Christensen 1998:291), that goes on for four scenes in the conflict. This cycle is broken only when Pertti finally takes the initiative after taking a walk on Christmas Eve:

> E: sä viivyitkin kauan ((Pertti comes to the livingroom))
> P: kävelin itsekseni ja (.) mietin kaikenlaisia asioita ((Pertti sits down)) Eeva
> E: no
> P: Mä oo täys paska (1) mä (1) tiedän et sä haluut keskustella (3) tai että (.) minäkin keskustelisin (3) mutta Eeva mä en pysty (2) enhän mä oo enhän mä oo

koskaan oppinut keskustelemaan (3) tällänenhan mä oon aina ollu (.) täysin
kykenemätön ilmaisemaan tunteita (2) niinku sanotaan (10) ((Pertti gets up from
the chair, turns his back on Eeva, then faces her again)) mutta Eeva mä tunnen
(2) ja mä tiedän (.) tai mä haluun et (2) sä Eeva tiedät että mä
E: ((gets up from the chair and goes to Pertti)) mä tiedän ((Eeva hugs Pertti))

Pertti's lines show how difficult it is to stop the cycle of schismogenesis and give up
the battle for control that has developed in previous interaction. One may observe
this, in addition to Pertti's utterances, from the very long pauses he takes and the
unfinished sentences that are written for the character. Pertti's behaviour also goes
from one extreme to another, from complete denial of the conflict to taking the blame
for it. This is undoubtedly very stressful for the character.

The situations where the partners engage in complimentary communication are
generally much briefer than the periods of symmetrical interaction. Complimentary
communication often involves only one or two one-down messages. There are
roughly two kinds of situations where complementary interaction takes place. First,
decision making and, second, situations where a partner admits being wrong. The
first case can be as simple as the following:

M: pitäsköhän soittaa joku lääkäri tai joku
H: en mä usko sähän oot sitonu ton jo (.) viedään se sänkyyn ((Mirja and Hessu
take drunken Hannes to bed))

Here Mirja asks Hessu's advice with a one-down statement, and Hessu takes control
of the situation by deciding what to do in his one-up statement. In this exchange of
utterances Hessu is the dominant partner. Another example of complementary
communication is the scene, mentioned already in the previous section, where Eeva
and Pertti finally start talking about their relationship. In this conversation Eeva takes
the lead, she asks the questions and oders her husband to sit down and stay calm,
while Pertti lets his wife dominate and answers her questions obediently.

There also are several cases of transitional communication in *Kotikatu*. However,
these exchanges of utterances do not seem significant for describing the characters'
interaction. Overall, the main result for relational control is that the characters
engage in symmetrical communication frequently, while complementary
communication takes place only momentarily, i.e. there are high levels of
domineeringness, but low levels of dominance in the characters' communication. In
terms of the responses they get, none of the characters comes out as being more

powerful than their partner. Because of generally low level of dominance, there was no proof of any of the relationships being either rigid or flexible.

There are no scenes where a conflict would begin or continue because of punctuation differences. In Pirkko's and Janne's conflict about whether to have a baby punctuation problem appears in one of the scenes, but this is due to Pirkko holding information about the cause of her bad mood from Janne, and Janne failing to understand the situation. Thus, the problem is caused by Pirkko being secretive, and not the couple's tendency to punctuate interaction differently. In Pertti and Eeva's marriage crisis there are sings of differing punctuation too: Pertti attempts to start a new sequence of interaction and leave the conflict behind, while Eeva perceives a single conflict developing all the time. This results in Pertti's lines like, *"Mä en ymmärrä miten sä jaksat jankuttaa tosta samasta asiasta noin kauan (.) kaikkihan on ihan hyvin"*. However, this has undoubtedly more to do with Pertti avoiding the conflict issue than him perceiving that the conflict is already resolved.

Some aspects of the characters' metacommunication have already been mentioned. Metacommunication came up in section 7.2.2, where conflict management tactics were considered. Strategies like nonverbal rejection, leaving, physical aggression, and hostile questioning intrinsically carry nonverbal relationship messages with them. For example, hostile questioning implies that the content message of the utterance is a question, a request for information, while the relationship message is likely to be an accusation, or a threat. Metacommunication came up also in section 7.2.1, where the development of the conflicts was discussed. The first signs of a conflict were found to be nonverbal. These signs are metacommunication; they function as relationship messages warning that something is wrong.

Regarding metacommunication, Pertti's and Eeva's marriage crisis is interesting because it is so overtly about communication; for most of the time the partners are debating whether to communicate or not. It is also a conflict about defining the Mäkimaas' relationship after Eeva's announcement of adultery, so metacommunication, relational messages, are at the heart of this argument.

Metacommunication may take place by touching. In *Kotikatu* touch is usually an affectionate gesture. The characters touch each other in a reconciling or loving manner: they kiss, hug, touch their partner's hand, shoulder or knee. The only one that uses touch in any other way is Pertti. In the marriage crisis scenes, in addition to hitting her wife on the cheek, he touches Eeva by holding her on the shoulders and by grasping her arm. As relational messages these gestures are a part of Pertti's patronising strategy and domineeringness, his attempt to gain control over the situation. However, Eeva does not accept this kind of touching; she frees herself from his touch and Pertti's nonverbal control manoeuvres are rejected. Pertti allows this to happen; he does not resort to physical power. The nonverbal behaviour of the characters nonverbal behaviour describes the state of their relationship; it emphasises the competitive symmetry that has developed between the partners.

Pirkko uses another approach to get the relationship to go her way. In the conflict about having children Pirkko brings breakfast to bed, behaves affectionately and kisses Janne's ear in order to persuade him to change his mind. This affectionate behaviour stops and Pirkko leaves the bed immediately when Janne states that he still is against having children. In this case Pirkko metacommunicates first affection and then anger and distance, and this way puts pressure on Janne.

Generally the characters tend to face each other and look at each other when they are talking. On some occasions, they momentarily turn their backs at the other or avoid looking at their partner; this seems to express high emotional stress. When Janne is sitting at his computer, his back is facing the rest of the room and he sometimes speaks with his back on Pirkko. The characters do not talk at exceptionally close or distant proximity. Overall, in this television serial proximity does not seem to carry as much weigh as it did in the study of Burgoon, Buller, Hale & deTurk (1984). The characters talk at normal Finnish talking distance; after watching the scenes form videotape a detailed analysis of posture or kinesics does not seem significant for describing the characters behaviour in conflict situations. Nonverbal communication is brought up also in the following chapters when it is seen as significant for describing the communication of the characters.

7.4 Gendered Communication on Kotikatu

This chapter examines the characters' behaviour from a gender perspective. First, conflict management strategies, as well as issues connected to communication patterns and metacommunication are considered. Then, some other gender-related observations are explored. Finally, the characters' behaviour is examined in relation to Fitzpatrick's (1988a, 1988b, 1988c) couple types.

7.4.1 Conflict Management from a Gender Perspective

When one examines the use of competitive, cooperative and avoidance strategies by male and female characters of *Kotikatu*, clear differences appear. As we may see from table 4., which summarises the conflict management strategies from table 3., men resort to competitive conflict management tactics more than women; they used competitive strategies 16 times, while the number for female characters is 9. Differences appear also in the frequency in which the characters apply cooperative strategies; female characters use them almost twice as often as male characters. However, the contrast is even larger in avoidance strategies, which are almost exclusively applied by men. Male characters make use of avoidance tactics eight times during the conflict scenes, while *Kotikatu*'s women resort to avoidance strategies only twice. According to this categorisation, *Kotikatu* draws a picture of competitive and conflict avoiding men, and cooperative, but also competitive women. This differs from the results of the study of Cupach and Canary (1995), where wives reported using more competitive strategies than their husbands. In the following, we shall examine the ways in which women and men cooperate, compete, and avoid conflicts on *Kotikatu*.

Table 4. The use of conflict management strategies by female and male characters of *Kotikatu*.

	women	men
competitive strategies	9	16
cooperative strategies	12	7
avoidance strategies	2	8

Though female characters use cooperative strategies more than male characters, they do not always behave constructively. The women of *Kotikatu* can also be negative and put emotional pressure on their partners. Especially Eeva's criticism of Pertti is, at times, uttered in a very negative way; for example, she blames Pertti of being *"naurettava omahyväinen idiootti"*. Both Eeva and Pirkko also pressure their husbands emotionally, Eeva by refusing to behave like things were back to normal, and Pirkko by showing her discontent.

Men's tendency to use avoidance strategies supports the previously mentioned idea of men withdrawing from conflict situations. For example, the strategy of leaving is used exclusively by male characters; during the conflict situations women never walk out just because there is an argument going on. But why do Pertti, Janne and Hessu leave in the middle of arguments? The male characters' behaviour suggests that their leaving is about power and saving face. Of the three men in *Kotikatu* Pertti is the most determined to avoid conflict situations; he utilises four different avoidance strategies during the marriage crisis with Eeva. The first time Pertti resorts to leaving is right after Eeva has told him about her affair:

> E: Pertti tää meidän avioliitto on henkitoreissaan jos me meinataan jotenkin selvitä tästä (.) meidän on selvitettävä kaikki (.) ihan kaikki (.) ja oltava toisillemme rehellisiä
> P: ei mulla oo mitään selvitettävää (.) eikä kerrottavaa
> E: mutta mulla on (1) Pertti m (.) mä olen pettänyt sua
> P: pettäny (.) mitä sä tarkoitat
> E: pettänyt (.) <u>ollut toisen miehen kanssa sängyssä</u> (.) rakastellut (.) <u>tehnyt aviorikoksen</u> (.) viime viikolla kun sä olit Brysselissä
> P: kenen kanssa
> E: ei sil oo mitään merkitystä (.) se mies ei merkitse mitään
> P: no (Pertti steps closer to Eeva, sighs and hits Eeva on the cheek, then leaves the appartment. Eeva stays in the kitchen and starts to cry))

This scene demonstrates Pertti's incapability to deal with emotional turmoil. He channels his anger to physical aggression, hurts Eeva back by hitting her, and then escapes from the scene. Later during the conflict Pertti decides to go jogging when the argument is about to begin. In this case, leaving is a way to stop Eeva from controlling the topic of discussion, a means of getting away from an uncomfortable conversation with a feeling of staying in control; it seems more like a power move. As such it goes together well with Pertti's refusal to respond to Eeva, and his patronising comments, which both have been characterised as masculine conflict behaviour by DeFrancisco (1998). Hessu, on the other hand, seems to leave the cafe

in order to save face after Mirja, and especially Anu, have threatened his manhood by talking about his unwillingness to have sex. Janne's character walks out of his home twice, first when he is angry about the pictures on the Internet, and then after he has found out about Pirkko's pregnancy test. On both occasions the act of leaving seems to function as Janne's way of showing that he is very angry, leaving functions as a punishment to Pirkko.

P: Janne mä en vaan ymmärrä eh (.) mun mielestä sulla ei oo mitään järkevää syytä vastustaa lapsen hankki[mista]
J: [mikä] tahansa syy mulla on niin se on järkevä syy
(.) koska mä vastustan sitä (.) vaikka mä sanon et mä (.) mä en tahdo lapsia koska mä kuvittelen olevani paavi (.) niin se on järkevä syy (.) ymmärrät sä (5) mä näen tän asian sillä tavalla (.) et sä olet pettänyt minua erittäin tärkeässä asiassa
P: anteeksi
J: hitto (.) anteeksi ((Janne takes his coat))
Pi: mitä muuta mä voin sanoa
J: et varmaan yhtään mitään (.) anteeksi ((Janne walks out of the door))

Leaving also emphasises independence, and thus fits all too well the characteristics of masculine communication mentioned in section 4.2.2. Leaving is the most effective conflict avoidance strategy, an ultimate withdrawal, which makes it impossible for the other partner to continue arguing. However, none of the studies quoted in section 4.2.2 actually mentions leaving the whole conflict scene as a withdrawal strategy, so we do not know whether this kind of behaviour is generally popular, or just a Finnish television script writer's way to end a conflict scene effectively. Nevertheless, it is a notable result that only men utilise this strategy in *Kotikatu*.

However, there are also evident differences between the male characters of *Kotikatu*. While Pertti clearly has a problem with speaking about conflict issues and Hessu show similar signs in his one conflict with Mirja, Janne is quite able to say how he feels, as we may notice from the extract above. He also introduces conflictual topics and discloses his feelings, for example, Janne tries to explain how he feels about having children. Janne interprets correctly Pirkko's nonverbal messages of being displeased, and this shows that he pays attention to metacommunication. Thus, Janne's communication includes also characteristics that are usually associated more with feminine than masculine communication cultures.

J: mä en tiedä mä nyt koen (.) semmosta epävarmuutta (.) mä en oo vielä valmis
Pi: mutta ku tuo ei tarkoita yhtään mitään
J: mä en tiedä mitä se on mutta jotain se on (.) ja mun mielestä tää nyt on
sellanen asia jossa sun pitää kunnioittaa munkin mielipidettä (.) vai oot sä eri
mieltä
Pi: ((sighs)) no en ole ((Pirkko leaves the bed))
J: oot sä vihane ny
Pi: miten niin
J: no kun sä lähit tolla tavalla
Pi: en kai mä nyt sen takia lähteny et mä oon vihanen vaan ku mä oon kampaaja
(.) jos satut muistamaan
J: ai niin joo (.) hauskoja päitä ehheh eiku siis hauskaa päivää ((Pirkko turns up
her nose at Janne and leaves))

The female characters seem to have adapted the role of a woman as a "relationship expert" well. We may notice this from all the three women, but Eeva's behaviour reflects this role the most. The marriage crisis with Pertti is partially due to this "relationship thinking", Eeva states that in order to save their relationship she has to be honest with Pertti, and tell him about her affair. Eeva is the one that causes the crisis, but she does this, like a proper representative of the feminine communication culture, in order to save the relationship. Eeva also talks about the importance of being honest, but this in not of primary value to her. The viewer knows this because we know that the man Eeva has slept with is Pertti's brother Veikko. If Eeva wanted to be completely honest, she would have also revealed this to Pertti. But she does not do that because she knows that it might destroy her marriage. This kind of behaviour can be counted as an example of an aspect of feminine communication culture that Tannen (1986:135) calls "prioritisation of the relationship." By not telling Pertti about his brother, Eeva, in addition to saving herself from an even more unpleasant situation, also protects her husband from information that he might not be able to handle. However angry Eeva becomes during the conflict scenes, she never chooses to hurt Pertti with this information. At the same time Eeva also keeps a large part of the guilt to herself. She seems to feel responsible for the effect her words have on the listener. This kind of solidarity is closer to the features of feminine communication culture than the more individualistic "everybody for themselves" –thinking that is considered a part of the masculine communication in section 4.2.2.

In Eeva's and Pertti's relationship there is a difference in the partner's ability to self-disclose and function in the climate of negative affect. This seems to be much harder for Pertti. This can be noticed from the demand-withdraw interaction pattern they engage in and also from the way Pertti handles the news about Eeva's affair. Pertti's

problems to approach the conflict may be noted also form the way he talks, sometimes he suddenly changes his manner of speech to his professional discourse, the language of the courtroom:

> P: mulla on oikeus kieltäytyä semmosesta keskustelusta johon mä en usko (.) täällä vallitsee vielä sananvapaus (.) muista se rouva (.) ((points a finger at Eeva)) minä menen nyt suihkuun
> E: sul on oikeus sul on sananvapaus (.) ei tämä mikään oikeusistunto ole

Pertti also resorts to his father's sayings:

> E: väitätsä et meidän välit on täysin kunnossa (.) et sä rakastat mua ja mä rakastan sua ja me eletään tällä tavalla onnellisinä elämämme loppuun asti
> P: hei (.) kaikissa avioliitoissa on hyviä ja huonompia aikoja (.) ei ne siitä puhumalla parane (.) aika on paras tohtori sanoo faijakin
> E: ja siitä hyvästä äitis sai hermoromahduksen

From these examples we may notice that when Pertti is not comfortable with the "relationship discourse" he attempts to change the way of talking to a more familiar frame. The second extract also summarises Pertti's attitude to talk, "things do not get better by talking". This kind of attitude stems from a Finnish stereotype that has come a long way in the behaviour of Finnish men though it is now considered quite old-fashioned. It is a stricter version of the already mentioned feature of masculine communication culture: perceiving talk as instrumental. The difference between these two attitudes is that the American masculine communication culture perceives talks as a means to achieve goals or solve problems with (Wood 1997b:169-171), while the Finnish counterpart basically condemns talk as a futile exercise not qualified for problem solving; true men act instead. However, in light of Pertti's later behaviour, it seems unlikely that the character seriously believes this sentence he utters, it seems more like the kind of rhetoric that he turns to in an uncomfortable situation. There is also another stereotype that one may find in the behaviour of the male characters: men do not cry. Though both Eeva and Pirkko cry during the conflicts scenes, these situations do not make the men of *Kotikatu* weep.

The final reconciliation of the Mäkimaas marriage crisis takes place when Eeva suggests that they both make a list of the positive and negative aspects of their marriage. Eeva proposes this after reading it from a women's magazine as something a couple should do before they start discussing the possibility of divorce. By agreeing to do this Pertti silently acknowledges Eeva's expertise in relationship issues, and takes back the statement he has made before, during scene about Christmas preparations:

P: miten sä sit haluat että tämä asia ratkastaan (.) niinku noissa akkojen lehdissä
vai (1) keittiöpsykologiaa

Also Pirkko and Janne engage in a kind of demand pattern in their conflict about having a baby. Pirkko keeps bringing up the baby-issue, and Janne keeps answering that he is not ready for it. However, the ways in which Pirkko and Eeva introduce the conflict issues are quite different. Eeva's style is, from the first scene, very straightforward, she tells what she has done and then demands the situation to be dealt with. Pirkko's approach is different, she starts by introducing the topic slowly:

Pi: mitä sä oot muuten ajatellu tehä seuraavat kuuskyt vuotta
J: hei mitä (1) sä voisit itseasiassa ottaa toisen telan ja ruveta auttaan mua tuolt
toisesta päästä
Pi: eiku iha oikeesti (.) meinaat sä jatkaa opiskeluja vai mitä sä aiot tehä
J: en mä tiedä kai mun nyt pitää töitäki tehä (.) täytyy se laina kuitenki maksaa
(.) sit pitäs käydä intti tai sivari tai hankkii hullun paperit (.) en mä tiiä
tämmöstä kitkuttamist se kuitenkin tulee olemaan (1) kuin ni
P: ei kun mä (.)eh mä ajatteli et (2)
J: niin mitä (.) sano
P: mitä jos mä jättäsin e-pillerit pois

After Janne has refused the idea once, Pirkko brings it up again, determinably, but in a persuasive manner, together with bringing breakfast in bed. Also, in her complaints Pirkko uses a more indirect, equivocal style:

P: mullon mullon mullon minä minä minä ja mun tulevaisuus (.)tiätsä (.) sä
muistutat ihan yhtä jätkää ((Janne turns to his computer, Pirkko carries the
laudry behind Janne's back))
J: ai mitä sun jotain vanhaa kundikaverias vai
P: ei kun se joka istu koko ajan peilaamassa omaa itteensä (.)Narkissos
J: MÄ TEEN TÖITÄ [HEI]
P: [no]ihan samalla tavalla sekin istu lähteellä ja katto
omaa naamaansa (.) tiätsä miten sen sitten kävi
J: (.) en
P: no siihen se kato vaan näivetty kun se oli niin täynnä omaa itteensä

Thus, compared to Eeva, as well as all the other characters, Pirkko uses more nonverbal metacommunication, and indirect messages, wich are often considered more a feature of the feminine than the masculine communication culture (Wood & Dindia 1998:21-22). However, as all the other characters are quite straightforward in their communication, this seems to be more a personal characteristic than a general gender difference between the partners. Pirkko also attempts to use her female role as a "relationship expert" in order to cover the fact that she stopped taking the contraceptive pill without Janne's approval. She tries to explain her behaviour with

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their previous conversation not being profound enough. However, Janne does not accept this explanation:

P: Janne (.) mä yritin kertoa tästä (.) me yritettiin puhua tästä asiasta
J: mutta mitä (.) ei onnistuttu vai
P: mun mielestä me ei vaan päästy keskustelussa tarpeeks (.) pitkälle (.) mun mielestä me ei päästy tarpeeks syvälle
J: ei vaan sun mielestä ongelma on siinä (.) et sä et saanu tahtoas läpi

Because Mirja and Hessu only engage in one short three-scene conflict, it is difficult to say much about their communication. However, some signs of masculine and feminine communication behaviour can be observed. After Hessu has left the cafe, he meets Mirja outside their house and Mirja brings up the conflict by asking Hessu whether he was still angry. Hessu refuses to disclose, denies being angry and then just stares at Mirja without a reply and leaves. As mentioned before, this kind of conflict behaviour can be included in the masculine communication culture (DeFrancisco 1998). When Hessu does not reply, Mirja tries to keep the conversation flowing by continuing to talk about her dance class, a fairly irrelevant topic. This kind of behaviour has been mentioned in section 4.2.2 as typical for the feminine communication culture.

Apologies are spread quite evenly, both men and women of *Kotikatu* are capable of saying that they are sorry. The characters only smile a couple of times so there are no significant gender differences in smiling behaviour. Both women and men touch their partners, touch is initiated most often by Pirkko, she touches Janne in an affectionate way six times during the conflict scenes. Eeva, Janne and Hessu touch their spouses once and Pertti touches Eeva three times, as mentioned before. Thus, also the differences in touch seem to be more personality than gender related, no significant gender differences can be detected. No gender differences appear in the characters' use of space or their posture either. Both men and women more around and sit by the table frequently. Nor are there differences in the frequency of eye contact. Interruptions are very rarely used, thus they were not considered significant in terms of gendered communication.

7.4.3 Kotikatu and Couple Types

How do these three couples of *Kotikatu* relate to Fitzpatrick's (1988a) couple types? In light of the conflict scenes none of the couples is characterised as *traditionals*. The couples are not very conventional and the stability of the relationship does not seem to be a principal value to any of the partners. All couples are willing to engage in conflicts that may shake this stability, or even threaten its existence. The couples do not live according to very conventional male and female gender roles. From the characters, Pertti seems to have the most in common with the traditionals' orientation to relationships. His behaviour is, in many respects, close to Finnish male stereotype, and during the marriage crisis he expresses a wish to live by conventions. For example, Pertti makes scene when Eeva does not sleep in their common bed, and Pertti feels that it is important that their whole family spends Christmas together. On the other hand, traditionals are described to only argue about issues of real significance (Fitzpatrick 1988b:268), and while Pertti respects conventions, he also avoids talking about the real reasons of the marriage crisis.

On the basis of their conflict behaviour all the three couples would be classified as *independents*. Their relationships are constantly renegotiated and, as mentioned before, there is a large amount of competitive symmetry in their utterances. However, none of the couples use a lot of subtle avoidance strategies, like intellectualising or joking, which are mentioned by Fiztpatrick (1988:249) as typical for independents. Considering the cultural origin of this typology, it is not surprising that couples from a Finnish television serial would be categorised as independents. From a mainstream American perspective the Finnish gender roles may generally seem quite liberal and independent. Considering the cultural limitations of Fiztpatrick's questionnaire, they may seem even more so. None of the couples fit the category of separates, expressions of feelings and opinions are not avoided. The couples do not attempt to maintain an appearance of harmony in the relationship, nor do they often engage in complementary interaction.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Analysis of Results

This chapter shall summarise the main results of this study and examine them in relation to the theoretical background. When comparing the results with previously cited studies we must keep in mind that though the subject is roughly the same, research is mostly conducted in different contexts and cultures. Thus, similarities or differences in the results do not state anything about the validity of these studies.

The first research question dealt with the ways the characters react to conflict situations. Attention was directed to the overall development of the conflict, the conflict management tactics chosen, and attributions made about the reasons for the conflict. The results show that the conflicts in the intimate relationships presented in *Kotikatu* begun were found to start because of two general reasons: one partner hurts the other's feelings, or the partners attempt to attain incompatible goals. The first signs indicating that a situation is turning into an argument were found to be nonverbal. Hostile tone of voice or a partner's nonverbal withdrawal functioned as these first signs in most of the observed conflicts.

After a conflict has broken out on *Kotikatu*, it normally escalates until the situation comes to a turning point. The turning point is often a strategy shift from competitive or avoiding behaviour to a cooperative conflict management strategy. This changes the tone of the conversation and makes reconciliation possible. The turning point may also be brought about by an outsider's influence that makes the partners evaluate their situation differently. After the turning point some of the conflicts are explicitly settled, for example with an apology, while some simply fade away, while the partners' relationship normalises.

After an argument has started the characters use a large variety of tactics to manage the conflict situation. Most widely used are competitive strategies with cooperative strategies coming in second, and avoidance strategies being the least popular among the characters. The most popular conflict management strategy is personal criticism as the partners utter negative evaluations of each other quite frequently. Furthermore,

rationalisation or argumentation is often resorted to in *Kotikatu's* conflict situations. When the characters decide to cooperate they tend to disclose their feelings, be empathetic, and apologise if they feel they are to blame for the disagreement. When they choose to avoid discussing conflict issues they may try to change the topic of conversation, or simply leave the scene, and their partner, by walking out.

Generally, Sillars' (1986) Conflict Management Coding Scheme functioned as a good basis for categorising different approaches to arguments. However, the coding scheme was not directly suited for the requirements of this study: the scheme concentrates on verbal expressions without paying much attention to nonverbal communication, and it lacks several categories that are relevant when studying interpersonal conflict in intimate relationships. This is not surprising since the scheme has not been developed with intimate relationships especially in mind. Eight strategies: nonverbal rejection, leaving, physical and verbal aggression, rationalisation or argumentation, apologising, forgiveness, and patronising or giving orders, were added to the coding scheme. Three of these tactics are purely nonverbal. Leaving and apologising were the ones most frequently used among the eight strategies; they play a significant part in describing the conflict behaviour of the couples on *Kotikatu*.

Other ideas from attributions theory were also realised in the conflict scenes of *Kotikatu*. The chosen conflict management strategy was connected to the outcome of the conflict; only cooperative strategies provided the means for settling conflicts successfully. Like the theory suggests (Sillars 1980a; Canary & Spitzberg 1990), also the characters in *Kotikatu* were often prone to attribute the responsibility for a conflict more to their partner than themselves. However, due to the limited information available about the thoughts and feelings of the characters, perceptual biases could not be studied in detail.

The second research question aimed at examining the power relations and communication patterns between the characters with the help of relational control and relational communication. In terms of relational control, the partners tended to behave in a domineering fashion; they frequently engaged in interaction described as competitive symmetry, where both partners are trying to define the relationship by

using one-up statements. This result supports the finding that the characters frequently resort to competitive strategies in their arguments; though applying a competitive strategy is not the only way to try to define the relationship, competitive statements are generally classified as one-up messages. Symmetrical interaction also implies that neither of the partners gets to dominate the relationship. Also complementary interaction took place during the conflict scenes, but these were relatively rare moments. There were some cases of transitional communication too.

Due to generally low levels of dominance with all the characters, none of the relationships could be categorised as being either rigid or flexible. There was one process of schismogenesis in the research material, but no conflicts were considered to start because of punctuation differences. This may be because the subject of analysis is in the form of television drama where all scenes have clear beginnings and ends.

Analysing the characters' nonverbal communication with the help of the findings of Burgoons & al. (e.g. Burgoon, Buller, Hale & deTurk 1984; Burgoon & Dillman 1995) proved to be quite difficult. Only touching and sometimes characters turning their backs to the other seemed significant for describing the partners' conflict behaviour. Touch was mainly used as an affectionate gesture expressing intimacy. Affectionate touching functioned often as a sign indicating that the conflict was reconciled and touching takes place at the end of four of the six conflicts. Only Pertti used touch in an aggressive or domineering manner.

Another aspect of nonverbal communication that carried metacommunicative value was that occasionally the partners turned their backs to each other. Usually, in the conflict scenes partners were facing each other at a relatively standard Finnish talking distance. However, when a partner turned his or her back to the other consequently making eye contact impossible, it was usually an indication of emotional stress. For example, when Eeva begins to tell her husband about her affair, she first turns her back to him and walks to the kitchen, away from Pertti. Moreover, when Pertti starts to apologise for his behaviour to Eeva, he turns his back to her for a moment.

Apart from the above-mentioned aspects, in this study did not find kinesics or proximics alone did not seem to hold much importance in the communication between the characters. This supports the notion of studying nonverbal communication together with verbal expressions. At least in this study, nonverbal cues alone did not have much influence on the viewer's relational interpretations. Thus the theoretical background about the meaning of nonverbal metacommunication did not prove to be very useful. However, a very detailed analysis of nonverbal cues was not the aim of this study.

The conventions of television drama provide, in part, an explanation for the somewhat scarce results in nonverbal communication. In television drama, the positions and movements of actors are rehearsed and determined in advance. This may limit and simplify the characters' use of proximics and kinesics compared to authentic nonverbal reactions. Moreover, style of acting is determined by the conventions of the genre. Regarding gendered communication, differences in national cultures may have affected the results in nonverbal communication. It is possible that because of in many ways more advanced equality in the Finnish society (e.g. Hofstede 1991:82-86) women and men in Finland also behave nonverbally more alike than they do in the United States. Thus, feminine and masculine communication cultures are more alike here, and fewer differences in nonverbal communication appear.

The third research question examined the characters behaviour in relation to the findings of gender research on communication. Regarding conflict management strategies, men were found to resort to competitive tactics more than women, who, for their part, applied cooperative strategies more often than men. However, the gender difference was largest with avoidance strategies that were used almost solely by men, for example, when they applied the strategy of leaving.

These results support the notion that feminine communication culture places more emphasis on connection that can only be created through cooperation, while masculine communication is more prone to manifest independence and power with a more competitive attitude towards communication (Wood 1997b:168-169). On the other hand, the results are quite opposite to the findings that seem to indicate that in

conflict situations, women generally behave more negatively than men (Gottman & Levenson 1988:198; Notarius & Johnson 1982). Cupach and Canary (1995) found that wives reported using more competitive strategies in conflict situations than their husbands. This is clearly not the case on *Kotikatu*. However, the female characters of *Kotikatu* do also use competitive strategies, and when they do, they are often negative in a more outspoken way than their male counterparts. For example, Pirkko answers to Janne's criticism about keeping her biological father a secret with quite a categorical accusation *"sä et tiedä mitään etkä ymmärrä mitään"*. Perhaps the conclusion is that female characters are, at the same time, often constructive and cooperative, but sometimes also very negative. The female characters, as well as the feminine communication culture, seems to be multidimensional, and can successfully accommodate diverse ways of behaving.

The demand-withdraw interaction pattern that frequently emerges in studies about gender and conflict behaviour (e.g. Gottman & Levenson 1988) was also present in the conflicts of *Kotikatu*. Pertti and Eeva's marriage crisis provided a good example of this pattern of communication where one partner keeps demanding the other to discuss a problem, while the other keeps withdrawing from the conversation. The demand-withdraw interaction pattern is at the same time a display of complementary schismogenesis, where both partners refuse to accept the other's definition of the relationship. In the case of this communication pattern the theories from relational communication and gender research support each other.

In this demand-withdraw interaction pattern Pertti chooses to deny the existence of the conflict and applies a variety of avoidance strategies while doing so. He even resorts to stonewalling, which can be a very stressful way to avoid talking about a conflict. The tendency of men to withdraw from conflict situations has been widely established in gender research (e.g.Shaap, Bunk & Kerkstra 1988; Sagrestano Heavey & Cristensen 1998) and this tendency is also clear on *Kotikatu*. The most popular avoidance strategy for male characters is leaving. This kind of withdrawal is not mentioned in the gender studies cited in the theoretical background for this stydy. However, one may not draw that many conclusions from this since walking out is not an option in the research settings of most of these studies. *Kotikatu's* men seem to leave the conflict scenes because of four different reasons: first, to escape from a

difficult or uncomfortable situation; second, to save face; third, to hang on to one's power position; and, fourth, to punish the partner. Naturally, leaving may also offer the character a chance to think things through in peace and quiet.

A tendency to withdraw from conflicts does not quite fit some of the characteristics of masculine communication culture mentioned before, as men are supposed to *"wrest the talk stage from others"* (Wood 1997b:169), not leave it altogether. One explanation might be found in different national cultures. While strongly assertive communication may be a norm for masculine communication culture in the United States, it is not traditionally encouraged in Finland, not even for men. Also Hofstede (1991:89) has come to this conclusion when he describes the Finnish culture as "feminine": a society where both boys and girls learn to be modest. Thus, for the characters of *Kotikatu*, leaving the apartment in the middle of a heated argument may be a better option than becoming very assertive, maybe even aggressive, in their verbal communication. Leaving may be considered as less of an offence than loosing one's temper.

In general, the characters of *Kotikatu* quite surprisingly demonstrate many characteristics of feminine and masculine communication cultures defined by the preponderantly American gender research. Though the serial is situated in a Finnish cultural environment, and neither female nor male characters conform exclusively to their respective communication culture, there are several elements of gendered communication that remain significant in describing how men and women behave on *Kotikatu*. Thus, regarding gender differences there seems to be many similarities between the American theory about communication cultures and this Finnish television serial. Though this does not mean that Finnish and American gender roles are alike, it suggests that some gender differences are expressed in similar fashion in both cultures. The intimate conflicts of *Kotikatu* do not, however, give much support to the idea that gender differences reflect unequal power relations between men and women; that feminine communication stems from powerlessness (e.g. Henley 1976). Though male domination and patriarchal power relations undoubtedly still exist also in Finnish society, the arguments on *Kotikatu* do not seem the right place to look for them. At least in conflict situations, *Kotikatu*'s women do not act like the "weaker" sex.

8.2 Evaluation of the Research Process

The aim of this study was to describe the conflict behaviour in the intimate relationships of *Kotikatu*. This was done by integrating mass media and interpersonal communication research, and using the method of qualitative content analysis. The analysis was conducted after examining a wide variety of theories in interpersonal communication, gender research, and the characteristics of television as a medium. These theories provided tools for the analysis of conflict behaviour, and at the same time, inevitably, directed attention to certain features of the character's communication at the expense of others. However, the relatively unstructured method of qualitative content analyses also left room for observations that arose from the research material, but were not discussed in the theoretical background.

Attributions theory (Canary & Spitzberg 1990; Sillars 1980a; Sillars1980b) and Sillar's Conflict Management Coding Scheme (1986) provided a good basis for analysing *Kotikatu*'s interpersonal conflicts. The connection between the attributions about reasons of the conflict and the chosen conflict management tactics, suggested by e.g. Canary & Spitzberg (1990:140), was visible also in the communication of *Kotikatu*'s characters. Also Sillars' (1986) division of conflict management tactics into competitive, cooperative and avoidance strategies worked well with *Kotikatu*'s interpersonal conflicts.

Probably due to its emphasis on verbal communication, the categorisation of conflict management strategies did not grasp expressions of anger, or other emotions, very well. Anger can be expressed through utterances that belong to many different strategies. This seems to indicate that even though strategies reveal something about one's true emotions, they remain at the surface of communication and are more descriptive about the form than the content of interaction. One may also contemplate whether expressions of anger should have been counted as a conflict management strategy in themselves; letting one's anger out can be a strategy choice just as well as deciding to avoid the conflict.

During the research process we noticed that the theories introduced seemed to intertwine. For example, both gender research and relational communication theory

largely speak of the same phenomenon when they refer to *demand-withdraw interaction pattern* and *schismogenesis*. Here, for example, the power dimension that is essential in describing a schismogenesis adds to the understanding of what is going on in the situation that gender research describes as a demand-withdraw interaction pattern. Due to other similar cases, the research questions proved to be partly overlapping possibly explaining why the results for the second research question are quite scarce.

The observation and analysis in this study have been conducted by a single person and consequently the researcher's personal interests and interpretations are present in the analysis. This may be considered as a problem for the reliability of the study; it is always possible that another researcher would have noticed and emphasised different aspects of the characters' interpersonal communication. This study is the researcher's interpretation of the communication of *Kotikatu*, but it strives to be a well-argued one, several examples and extracts from the transcript are used in order to illustrate the inferences made. The relevant theories and the methods used have also been described.

One should keep in mind that the interpretation of the results primarily covers those twenty episodes of *Kotikatu* that form the research material of this study. Though the results are likely to give a picture of the way couples generally argue in this serial, there are also couples in *Kotikatu* that were not studied, because they did not appear in conflict situations during the twenty episodes taped. These couples might argue differently. However, as the scriptwriters and the surrounding society stay the same, the same elements are likely to appear also in other couples' communication. One may also suggest that the results tell something about the way couples argue in Finnish television drama of social realistic genre. But do the results, in any way, describe actual Finnish relationships? An answer is offered by models theory that has examined television drama's relation to reality. The theory differentiates between *descriptive* and *prescriptive* models. Descriptive models are models of pre-existing reality, while prescriptive models are models for an intended reality. During the process of writing a conflict scene for a television drama the writers utilise their experience and knowledge of real life conflicts as well as knowledge of conventions and formats of a particular television genre. This way every episode of the drama is a

descriptive model of "both life and art" (Shore 1998:17). These episodes will, in turn, also serve as prescriptive models for both real life situations and future programmes of the same genre. (Shore 1998:16-17.)

Thus, though the results clearly can not be generalised to cover the Finnish society, they do reflect real conflicts in Finnish relationships. In addition, they describe the behaviour that may function as prescriptive models of conflict behaviour to the viewers of *Kotikatu*. These models include images where both partners attempt to dominate the situation, and resort to competitive conflict management strategies in order to do this. However, they also offer images of conflicts that are usually settled and of characters that are able to apologise and forgive. Furthermore, models for gendered communication are also available: men tend to compete and avoid conflicts, while women generally act more cooperatively. The model of conflict behaviour offered to male viewers may seem somewhat worrying; the serial might reinforce an image of men behaving competitively and resorting to the strategy of leaving, when a situation gets uncomfortable.

Conflicts in intimate relationships form only one part of what is going on in *Kotikatu*. The twenty taped episodes lasted for 16 hours altogether, while the conflict scenes take about one hour to watch through. This reminds us that *Kotikatu* is not only about conflicts and intimate relationships, it follows the interaction between parents and children and between different families as well. However, at least some of the conflict situations in the material are likely to function as mini-climaxes in the serial. For example, Pertti and Eeva's marriage crisis formed a continuous narrative that also included several scenes where the partners interacted with other people. The narrative was followed in several episodes, and at least Pertti hitting Eeva, as well as Pertti's outburst of regret on Christmas Eve can be counted as mini-climaxes.

It would be useful, for future research to examine in more detail the interpretations that viewers attach to the behaviour of television drama characters. Now that the analysis of some of the interactions of the characters on *Kotikatu* has been achieved, it would indeed be interesting to determine how similar or different a viewer's perception of the content is. How seriously are the actions of the characters taken? Are these people considered as real role models? Another television serial, Salatut

elämät, has recently provoked a lot of debate about its controversial themes and their influence on especially young viewers. Before the influence television drama has on our daily lives can be understood, in addition to analysing the content of the programmes, as was done in this study, one must also examine how that content is received and interpreted by the viewers.

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ATTACHMENT 1

EXCERPT OF TRANSCRIPT

Merkkien selitykset:

(.) lyhyt tauko, sekuntti tai alle
(2) pidempi tauko, suluissa montako sekuntia
tauko   sanan painotus
T   äänenvoimakkuuden nosto, huutaminen
[päällekkäin puhuminen alkaa
]   päällekäin puhuminen loppuu
((kirjoittajan kommentti nonverbaliikasta tai äänensävystä
J   Janne Mäkimaa
P   Pirkko Mäkimaa
E   Eeva Mäkimaa
Pe Pertti Mäkimaa
M Mirja Makimaa
H Hessu
A Anu

Scene 1
episode 81

Janne ja Pirkko kotona, J istuu tietokonee ääressä ja P laittaa pyykkiä kuivumaan.

J: ei mulla oo aikaa ruveta mikskään koiran kusettajaks ((vihaisesti))
P: no olisit säkin voinut vähän joustaa
J: mul on töitä (.) mä ostan huomenna osuuden yhdestä firmasta mulla on pelissä koko mun tulevaisuus
P: mullon mullon mullon minä minä minä ja mun tulevaisuus (.)tiätsä (.) sä muistutat ihan yhtä jätkää ((J kääntyy koneeseen päin, P kantaa pyykkitelineen J:n selän taakse))
J: ai mitä sun jotain vanhaa kundikaverias vai
P: ei kun se joka istu koko ajan peilaamassa omaa itteensä/Narkissos
J: MÄ TEEN TÖITÄ [HEI]
P: [No]ihan samalla tavalla sekin istu lähteellä ja katto omaa naamaansa (.) tiätsä miten sen sitten kävi
J: (.) en
P: no siihen se kato vaan näivetty kun se oli niin täynnä omaa itteensä

scene 2
episode 81

Janne ja Pirkko kotona, J tietokoneen ääressä, P imuroi äänekkäästi J:n selän takana. Ovikello soi, P rämäyttää imurin maahan mielenosoituksellisesti ja avaa oven.

Pe: ((tulee sisään)) morjensta
P: moi
Pe: Aha (.)sinä täällä imuroit
P: joo pitää pistää paikat kuntoon ennen lähtöö
((J kääntyy pois koneelta))
Pe: Janne (2) mä toin sulle nyt ne rahat saman tien ((Pe ottaa rahaa kukkarostaan))
J: Mitkä rahat
Pe: ne viiskyt tonnii (1) sähän tarttet nää huomenna
J: joo joo mut en mä niitä voi nyt ottaa siis täytyyhän meidän tehdä nyt velkakirja
keskenämme ja(1) hei jos sä voisit tulla huomenna kaheks pankkiin niin me voitas sit
siel hoitaa kaikki samaan aikaan
Pe: (3) selvä (5) ((katsoo rannekelloaan ja laittaa rahat takaisin kukkaroon)) teemme
näin ((kääntyy lähteäkseen, pysähtyy ja katsoo P:tä)) niin (.)hyvää matkaa (.) kenes
kanssa oot muuten lähdössä
P: Seijan (.) me ollaan kummatkin vähän loman tarpeessa
Pe: aijaa (3) mitä sille Seijalle kuuluu
P: ihan hyvää kai
Pe: joo (.)((ottaa takkinsa)) no ei sitten muuta kun tuota (.) (ottaa salkkunsa) pitäkää
hauskaa (.) mutta älkää liian hauskaa
J: Pikkusen muaki kyllä pelottaa kun ne latinot on näitten vaaleitten skandinaavien
perään ((P irvistää J:lle))
Pe: (3)((hymähtää, katsahtaa lattiaan)) moi moi ((Pe lähtee, P haroo hiuksiaan
vihaisesti))

scene 3
episode 81

Janne ja Pirkko kotona. J koneen ääressä P lukee taka-alalla J:n selän takana.

J: Pirkko
P: mmm (.) puhu
J: ((kääntyy tuolillaan enemmän P:hen päin)) anteeks ((P nostaa katseen kirjasta)) mä
vaan käyn vähän kuumana nyt tän kaupan kanssa ((J huokaa, kääntyy takaisin
koneeseen päin))
P: no kylhän mä kulta tiedän et sulla on kaikki pelissä ((kävelee J:n taakse ja ottaa kiinni
hartioista, kietoo kädet kaulan ympäri)) sikshän mä ajattelinkin että nyt on just hyvä
aika että mä oon pois jaloista (.) niin että sä voit keskittyä ((suutelee korvaa ja pörröttää
hiuksiä))
J: sä teet ton tahallas
P: ((hymyilee)) mmm ((suutelevat kevyesti))

scene 4
episode 83

Pertti ja Eeva kotona, Pe keittiössä aamiaisella, E eteisessä.

E: sä et sitten ehdi illaks kotiin

Pe: en millään mun pitää olla vielä huomenaamuna Strasbourgissa kokouksessa
E: ((kävelee M:n huoneeseen)) kaaos
Pe: mitä sä sanoit
E: en mitään (.) millonkahan tää nuori nainen oppii siivoon huoneensa ((katsoo lattialle, löytää sieltä yksittäispakatun kondomin, kävelee kondomin kanssa keittiöön ja asettaa sen Pe:n eteen pöydälle))
Pe: mitäs pilaa tää on (.) mä en todellakaan tarvitse työmatkoillani kondomeja ja jos mä niitä tarvitsen mä pystyn ostamaan niitä itsekkin
E: tää löyty Mirjan huoneen lattialta ((kävelee pöydän toiselle puolelle))
Pe: mitä (1) ei voi olla totta (.)ootsä ootsä puhunu Mirjan kanssa
E: mä löysin sen just äsken joten en todellakaan ole
Pe: ootsä tosissas ootsä puhunu Mirjan kanssa
E: puhunu mistä
Pe: seksistä (.)sukupuoliasioista yleensä (E nauraa) mikä sua naurattaa
E: voi Pertti näkisit itses (.) oletko sä miesparka puhunut sukupuoliasioista Mirjan kanssa tai Jannen kanssa sen enempää yleisesti kuin erityisestikään ((pirullisesti))
Pe: joo (.) tää on just tällasta näin että meidän alaikäsen tyttären huoneesta löytyy kondomi ja sä taas kerran syytät sun keski-ikästä miestäs ahdasmielisyydestä ja estyneisyydestä
E: onko sun pakko karjua etkö sä tajua että Veikko nukkuu vielä sun [työhuonees]
ˈPe: [ÄLÄ ITSE] HUUDA
E: hahah (.) kuules nyt (2) ((ottaa kondomin pöydältä)) mä löysin tämän ja tottakai mä hämmästyin ja järkytyinkin mutta kai vaan siksi että tää osoittaa että Mirja ei ole enää mikään pikkutyttö (.) ja ihan vaan sulle tiedoks mä olen kyllä puhunut sukupuoliasioista Mirjan kanssa ja jo Jannenkin kanssa ja jo monta vuotta sitten ja hyvää Brysselin matkaa mä näköjään taas myöhästyn töistä ((E kävelee eteiseen Pe seuraa perässä))
Pe: jos et sä puhu Mirjan kanssa niin mun täytyy puhua Mirjan kanssa heti kun mä tuun takasin (.) sun mielestä on ilmeisesti ihan oikein ja okei että kymmenenvuotiaat lapset harrastaa seksiä kenen kanssa tahansa ja missä tahansa
E: Mirja ei ole kymmenenvuotias sä oot monta vuotta ajasta jäljessä ja (.) jos se nyt seksiä harrastaa niin se ei tee sitä kenen kanssa ja missä tahansa
Pe: mikä piru sua oikein vaivaa (.) aina kun me yritetään keskustella niin sä suhtaudut muhun niin (.) jumalattoman ivallisesti ja katkerasti TÄYNNÄ VIHAA
((kuva siirtynyt viereiseen huoneeseen, jossa Veikko herää, eteisestä kuuluu vielä riitelyn äänia ja lopulta oven paiskaus))

scene 5
episode 83

Mirja ja Mirjan kaveri Anu kahvilassa.

A: mä oon oikeestaan tullu siihen tulokseen ett Hessulla on varmaan menny pieleen joku kerta kun se on yrittäny sitä
M: no se tuskin on sun päänsärkys
A: mikä muukaan se olis
M: Anu lopeta nyt
A: no mut kun mä oon ihan varma siitä ((H saapuu kahvilaan))