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**Intrapersonal Factors in Marital Conflict:
The Role of Efficacy Expectations**

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Abstract

This study focuses on two cognitive variables which may affect marital satisfaction, spouses' self-efficacy and motivation judgments regarding conflict solving behaviors. The constructs of self-efficacy and motivation are clarified and a measure of the constructs is introduced. Efficacy and motivation are hypothesized to predict marital satisfaction, behaviors directed at conflict resolution, and the affect experienced by spouses in relation to marital conflict. Spouses' judgments were assessed with self-report measures administered through the mail. Analysis of the data revealed that efficacy is an important predictor of satisfaction, and motivation seems to be a key in the prediction of behavior. The predictive relationships between efficacy and affect and between motivation and satisfaction were not as clear which suggests a further examination of the relationships between these constructs. The findings point to the usefulness of a model which incorporates both efficacy and motivation in the assessment of marital satisfaction, behavior and affect.

Psychologists have paid increasing attention to the role of cognitive variables in marriage, especially the association between cognitive variables and marital satisfaction. One such variable, efficacy expectations, is particularly important in the study of marital conflict because it is thought to be related to attributions, problem solving behaviors (e.g., helplessness, persistence), affect, and the focus of change in efforts to resolve conflict (Doherty, 1981; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Although some attempts have been made to measure efficacy, a widely accepted measure of the construct has not emerged. This may be due to the difficulty encountered in operationalizing efficacy and the lack of attention given to the construct of motivation. The present study therefore analyzes efficacy as it applies to marriage and examines a measure of efficacy based on this analysis.

Efficacy in Basic Research

The construct of efficacy was introduced by Bandura (1977a) and has been defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to execute given levels of performance" (Bandura, 1984, p. 232). Efficacy was conceptualized as a mediator between therapy and behavior change. Bandura went so far as to say, "Among the forms of forethought that affect action, none is more central or pervasive than people's judgments of their capabilities to deal with different realities" (Bandura, 1984, p. 231).

Bandura distinguished efficacy from outcome expectations. Outcome expectations concern the likely consequences of a behavior. These consequences include "the natural effects of actions as well as extrinsic social and material effects, and self-evaluative reactions" (Bandura, 1984, p.239). Bandura stressed that it is important to separate judgments of efficacy from judgments of outcome because people may believe that certain actions may produce certain consequences but may doubt their abilities to perform those actions (Bandura, 1977a).

Outcome expectations were believed to be important sources of motivation. Although Bandura (1983) stressed motivation as an important factor in performance attainments, he failed to define its exact role in making and measuring efficacy judgments. Distinguishing efficacy from both outcomes and motivation is crucial to the measurement of efficacy.

Most attempts to measure efficacy in basic research have concentrated on subjects' perceived level of performance on skill tasks (e.g., performing a strenuous physical activity, handling a feared snake). In marital research this may not be adequate because other factors like "affective exchange, collaboration, and commitment" are salient issues in marriage (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987 p. 1117).

Efficacy in Marital Research

A consensus has emerged that efficacy expectations are important to the study of conflict among intimates (Doherty,

1981; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Notaricus & Vanzetti, 1983; Weiss, 1984). Doherty (1981) hypothesized that "efficacy is probably a central determinant of successful family coping as well as individual coping" (p. 43). According to Notaricus and Vanzetti (1983), couples high in efficacy are characterized by less frustration and disappointment and more persistence when faced with a conflict situation or failure. These characteristics led to the hypothesis that a couple with high efficacy, "is expected to be more successful at conflict resolution and therefore to be more satisfied with the marriage than the couple with low relational efficacy" (Notaricus & Vanzetti, 1983, p. 211).

Although the construct of efficacy has gained the support of marital researchers, the results from studies assessing efficacy in marriage have not been encouraging. Moderate correlations have been found between efficacy and satisfaction (Notaricus & Vanzetti, 1983), positive and negative behaviors (Weiss, 1984), and helplessness (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). In contrast, no significant relationship was found between efficacy and persistence (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). But as these researchers point out, even moderate relationships are noteworthy because of the difficulties inherent in conceptualizing and measuring efficacy. These difficulties have probably led to underestimates of the effects of efficacy.

Conceptualization and Measurement of Efficacy

The difficulties that are encountered in the study of efficacy in marital conflict stem from inadequate conceptualizations of efficacy. In marital research, efficacy usually refers to spouses' beliefs in their abilities to resolve conflicts in their marriage. However, this straightforward view of efficacy has not been consistently employed resulting in variability across studies in the conceptualization and measurement of efficacy. This is illustrated in the following review and critique of four different conceptualizations and measures of efficacy.

Weiss (1984) stated that efficacy expectations are "designed to capture expectations about likely outcomes of conflict-resolving interactions in general, as well as those involving particular content" (p. 236). It is apparent that this conception has a major flaw -- it concentrates on expectations of outcomes instead of efficacy. Not surprisingly then, Weiss' measure of efficacy, assesses likely outcomes instead of efficacy. More specifically, the scale assesses probable feelings and actions that would take place during a discussion such as "propose constructive solutions", "feel understood" and "turn the discussion into an argument". The feelings such as "feel understood" refer to outcomes of the discussion and the actions such as "propose constructive solutions" refer to the

likelihood of the behaviors occurring which is a combination of efficacy and the motivation to perform the behaviors.

Weiss found in his study that the "so-called efficacy measures did not form a single construct" (p.239). This finding is not surprising considering that a single construct of efficacy was probably not being measured; instead three separate constructs were included in the measurement (i.e., efficacy, outcomes and motivation). In order for a single construct to be found, outcome items must be separated from efficacy items, and efficacy items must only reflect one's perceived ability to perform a behavior, not the likelihood of the behaviors occurring.

Notaricus conceptualized relational efficacy as "spouses' beliefs about their ability to resolve problem discussions" (Notaricus & Vanzetti, 1983 p. 211). This conception is straightforward, but Notaricus' measure of efficacy is problematic. According to Notaricus, the Marital Agendas Protocol (MAP; Notaricus & Vanzetti, 1983) measures efficacy by having couples consider 10 areas (e.g., money, sex and communication) and then indicate, "If ten disagreements arose in this area, how many would you be capable of resolving to your mutual satisfaction?" (p.212). However, the actual instructions for the MAP read: "Out of every ten disagreements in each marital area below, how many do you believe you and your spouse resolve to your mutual satisfaction?" (p.224). These instructions thus

ask couples to rate how many conflicts they believe they have resolved in the past. Also there is no mention of their ability to resolve conflicts in the example. So neither efficacy to resolve conflicts nor expectations for future events are measured by the MAP.

Doherty (1981) offered a third conceptualization of efficacy; it constituted the answer to the question "Do we have the ability to bring about a solution?" (p. 35). But when Doherty defined efficacy as "the individual's expectation for the couple...to engage in effective problem-solving activity" (p.35), he introduced the construct of motivation (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). Not only does he include ability in his conceptualization of efficacy, but he, like Weiss, also assesses the desire of the couples to carry out the problem-solving behaviors.

Doherty can also be criticized for assessing only relational efficacy (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). A study conducted by Fincham and Bradbury (1987) supported the contention that efficacy for both self and dyad are important. Often, conflict can be resolved without the collaborative efforts of both partners. For example, one member of the dyad changes a behavior that causes conflict, thereby resolving it, without the efforts of the other member of the dyad.

Fincham and Bradbury (1987) adopted the view that efficacy concerns a person's "sense of mastery or ability to perform the behaviors needed to resolve the conflict" (p. 1110). They

pointed out that understanding efficacy in marriage is very different from efficacy in basic research. In basic research, efficacy is concerned with peoples' levels of performance on behavioral tasks. But simply focusing the measurement of efficacy on performance attainments may not be adequate due to the complexity of marital relationships.

Fincham and Bradbury did not, however, construct a measure of efficacy. Instead, they used a single item, "I am able to do the things needed to settle our conflicts" (p.1110), to assess efficacy in this study. This item clearly measures ones' efficacy to resolve conflicts. Although it does not explicitly refer to expectations for future events (i.e., "I will be able..."), it refers to a sense of general efficacy which is assumed to hold for future events. The major problem with this measure is that the use of only one item casts doubt upon its reliability.

The Role of Motivation

One shortcoming of past research is the limited attention given motivation and its unclear relation to efficacy. As mentioned earlier, Bandura discussed motivation but failed to define its role in his self-efficacy theory. Marital researchers have also discussed motivation, but they also fail to define its exact role. Fincham and Bradbury (1988) emphasized the need for a better understanding of motivation, and suggested that by considering efficacy and motivation, greater prediction of

behavior and its associated affect, may be possible. Other researchers have also recognized the important role of motivation in marital conflict. For example, Doherty (1981) stated that, "conflict is created and sustained by [sic.] multiplicity of influences not explicitly considered in this model, e.g., ...individuals' motivation to resolve conflicts..." (p. 42). According to Doherty, a couple with high efficacy is more likely to engage in problem-solving behavior if they are motivated to do so. Here, Doherty considered motivation separately from efficacy as an index of the probability of conflict-resolving behaviors. But Doherty also considered motivation and efficacy as the same construct in this example, "Low efficacy denotes the belief...that the family members cannot effectively cope with their conflict...because of...lack of motivation, or other factors..." (p.37).

Notarious and Vanzetti (1983) did not mention motivation directly, but it seems to be implied in their view that, "Low relational efficacy might reflect a lack of skills....low efficacy might also, however, be present when the necessary skills are available but the couple gives up too quickly when faced with a conflict situation" (p.221). A couple with very low motivation would probably inevitably give up when faced with conflict regardless of their perceived skill level or efficacy. But here, Notarious and Vanzetti indicated that low efficacy

reflects low effort or motivation, thereby assuming that efficacy and motivation are not separate constructs.

If efficacy is solely ones' belief about his or her abilities, then how can it be affected by motivation? It seems to be more likely that, consistent with Doherty's first conception of motivation, efficacy and motivation are separate constructs. Efficacy refers to ones' perceived capabilities to resolve a conflict in the marriage and motivation refers to the willingness or desire to resolve them by performing the necessary behaviors.

The Utility of Motivation

Judgments of perceived ability and desire to resolve conflicts, seem to be important considerations in spouses' expectations of behavior. Thus, if efficacy and motivation are measured separately, each may contribute unique variance in the prediction of behavior. Together, they may predict the probability or likelihood that a couple will engage in conflict-resolving behaviors. By measuring both efficacy and motivation, four different groups of couples may emerge: couples with high perceived capabilities to engage in conflict-resolving behaviors and a desire to do so, couples with high perceived capabilities that do not desire to engage in the necessary behaviors, couples with low perceived capabilities and high desire and finally couples with low perceived capabilities and desire.

The likelihood of conflict-resolving behaviors are not the same for these groups. That is, the likelihood of conflict-resolving behaviors in the two high-efficacy groups and the two low-efficacy groups differs because the desire to engage in the behaviors is different (see Table 1). In the high-efficacy, high-motivation group, we would expect to see a high rate of conflict-resolving behaviors. In the high-efficacy, low-motivation group, spouses would not be expected to engage in as

Insert Table 1 about here

many conflict-resolving behaviors because of their low motivation. In the low-efficacy, high-motivation group, it would be expected that some conflict resolving behaviors would occur and in the low-efficacy, low-motivation condition, very few or no conflict-resolving behaviors would be expected. In sum, this analysis of efficacy and motivation gives a more complete description of the likelihood of conflict-resolving behaviors than an analysis of efficacy alone.

Motivation to resolve conflicts may also contribute unique variance in the prediction of spouses' marital satisfaction and the affect spouses experience towards the conflicts in their marriage. In addition, it may also be useful to cross the dimensions of efficacy and motivation to examine the differences in specific instances of affect. For example, a couple with high

motivation and low efficacy may feel frustrated after repeated attempts at conflict resolution have failed. In contrast, a spouse with low motivation and high efficacy may feel indifference towards conflict resolution.

Towards a More Complete Assessment of Efficacy

The review of research on efficacy in marriage points to two possible improvements in the measurement of efficacy. One concerns the operationalization of efficacy. The improvements that can be made here include considering the efficacy of both the couple and the individual, and measuring only spouses perceived sense of mastery, not the probability of future behavior or outcomes. The second improvement includes an assessment of motivation. It may be important to study the relationship between motivation and behavior, and other variables such as satisfaction and affect. The study reported implemented these improvements in an attempt to devise a more reliable and valid assessment of efficacy which may yield clearer associations between efficacy and variables such as behavior, satisfaction and affect.

Research Questions

This study will address four major questions. First, efficacy for self and dyad will be assessed separately. Both are expected to be useful in the assessment of efficacy. Second, both efficacy and motivation will be assessed to determine their utility in the study of marital conflict. More specifically, the

study examines whether efficacy and motivation will each account for unique variance in the prediction of behavior, satisfaction and affect. Efficacy and motivation are expected to be significant predictors of satisfaction, behavior and affect, and motivation is expected to be especially important in the prediction of behavior. In addition to their unique variance, the variance accounted for by the combination of efficacy and motivation in the prediction of the dependent variables will be examined.

Third, in an attempt to rule out alternative explanations, for any association found between efficacy and behavior/affect, and between motivation and behavior/affect, mood and satisfaction will also be assessed. The spouses' mood at the time of the study is not expected to influence their efficacy or motivation. Although efficacy and satisfaction are probably related, efficacy should still significantly predict behavior and affect with satisfaction taken into account. It is not as clear whether motivation and satisfaction are related, but satisfaction is not expected to influence the value of motivation in predicting behavior and affect.

Finally, the study examines whether four groups will emerge by crossing efficacy and motivation dimensions. If these four groups can be established, they will be analyzed for differences in behavior and affect. For behavior, it is expected that the high-efficacy, high motivation-group will emit the highest rate

of behaviors directed at alleviating conflict. The high-efficacy, low-motivation group and the low-efficacy, high-motivation group are expected to have similar patterns of conflict-resolving behaviors and the low-efficacy, low-motivation group are expected to demonstrate little or no conflict-resolving behaviors. In regard to affect, spouses in the high-efficacy, high motivation group are expected to feel hopeful, confident, and optimistic. Those in the high-efficacy, low-motivation group are expected to feel indifferent, and those in the low-efficacy, high-motivation group may experience feelings of frustration. Finally, those in the low-efficacy, low-motivation group are expected to feel hopeless, helpless and pessimistic towards the conflicts in their marriage.

Method

Subjects

Forty-nine couples were recruited for this study through advertisements in the local papers of a midwestern town. Wives had an average age of 32.50 ($SD = 9.55$), 14.55 ($SD = 2.38$) years of education, were married for 10.02 ($SD = 9.16$) years, and had a family income of 29,980 ($SD = 16,990$). Husbands averaged 34.00 ($SD = 11.40$) years of age, 14.45 ($SD = 3.94$) years of education, had been married 9.90 ($SD = 9.17$) years and had a family income of 31,770 ($SD = 16,920$). The average satisfaction scores on the Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was 103.04 ($SD = 32.67$) for wives and 103.90 ($SD = 29.31$) for husbands.

Materials

The materials included scales measuring satisfaction, efficacy and affect. The Locke Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959) was used to assess satisfaction. This scale is highly reliable for wives and husbands (split half = 0.90), and has the ability to distinguish between nondistressed and clinically distressed couples (Locke & Wallace, 1959).

The efficacy scale consisted of 22 items which asked couples to rate their agreement with a series of questions directed at their abilities and motivation to resolve conflicts in their marriage and their likely behaviors when faced with a conflict situation. Seven items were used to measure efficacy at the individual level and at the dyadic level of analysis. These were worded so that they referred to the self (e.g., "I am able to do the things needed to settle our conflicts") and the dyad (e.g., "There is no way that we can solve some of the problems in our marriage"), resulting in a total of 14 items. The reliabilities of the self-efficacy scales for individuals, (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.91, husbands = 0.90) were comparable to those of the scales assessing couple-efficacy (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.90, husbands = 0.93). Motivation was assessed by 3 items each for self (e.g., "I am very eager to work on problems that occur in my marriage"), and the couple (e.g., "We are not very interested in settling our disagreements"). The reliabilities for the self-motivation items for individuals (coefficient alpha;

wives = 0.75, husbands = 0.81) were also comparable to the couple-motivation items (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.92, husbands = 0.82). There were 2 items which assessed probable self-behaviors when conflict was encountered in the marital relationship (e.g., "When a conflict arises, I try to do things to resolve it as soon as possible" and "When it is difficult to resolve a conflict between us, I just try harder").

Affect was measured using two scales. One was the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS was used to assess general mood while the questionnaires were being completed. The PANAS is reliable for positive affect (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.92, husbands = 0.94) and for negative affect (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.92, husbands = 0.92), and is correlated with other widely used measures of depression, anxiety and general distress and dysfunction (Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). The second affect scale used was a 16-item scale that asked spouses the extent to which specific adjectives (e.g., confident, indifferent, guilty) described their feelings about the conflicts that occurred in their marriage. Four of the adjectives reflected positive affect (e.g., hopeful, optimistic) and twelve reflected negative affect (e.g., sad, frustrated). Positive affect (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.86, husbands = 0.86) and negative affect (coefficient alpha; wives = 0.89, husbands = 0.85) were reliably assessed using this measure.

Procedure

Couples received a packet in the mail which contained individual questionnaires for the husband and the wife. They were instructed to fill out the questionnaires separately, and to return them when completed with the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided by the researchers. The couples were thanked for taking part in the study and given \$20 for their participation.

Results

The first issue examined in this study concerned individual versus couple levels of analysis. Pearson correlations showed that efficacy for the self and efficacy for the dyad were highly correlated for wives, $r(46) = 0.89$, $p < .01$, and for husbands, $r(48) = 0.84$, $p < .01$. The correlations were similarly strong between motivation for the self and couple for wives, $r(47) = 0.81$, $p < .01$, and for husbands, $r(48) = 0.81$, $p < .01$. Due to these high correlations it seems that the distinction between self and dyad judgments is unwarranted. In light of this finding and for ease of interpretation, only judgments pertaining to the self were used in subsequent analyses.

The second issue investigated, the relative contribution of efficacy and motivation in the prediction of satisfaction, behavior and affect, was examined by means of regression analyses. In the first set of regression analyses, marital satisfaction served as the dependent variable and the predictor

variables were efficacy and motivation for the self. Both motivation (for wives, $t(45) = 2.6, p < .05$, for husbands, $t(44) = 2.7, p < .01$), and efficacy (for wives, $t(45) = 5.3, p < .01$, for husbands, $t(44) = 2.7, p < .01$) predicted satisfaction. Together, these two variables accounted for 70% of the variance in satisfaction for wives and 56% of the variance for husbands. Thus, efficacy and motivation are useful predictors marital satisfaction.

A similar analysis was performed in which mood, as measured by the PANAS, was also entered into the equation in an attempt to control for its effects (see Table 2). Efficacy remained a strong predictor of satisfaction even when positive and negative

Insert Table 2 about here

affect were held constant for both wives, $t(43) = 4.3, p < .01$, and husbands, $t(42) = 2.1, p < .05$. Motivation remained a significant predictor for wives, $t(43) = 2.6, p < .05$, but was no longer significant for husbands, $t(42) = 1.6, p > .05$. It therefore appears that the relation between efficacy and satisfaction is unaffected by mood. In contrast, mood affects the predictive value of husbands' motivation.

The next set of regression analyses was performed with the behavior-related items as the dependent variable. Motivation significantly predicted behavior (for wives, $t(45) = 4.3, p <$

.01, for husbands, $t(44) = 4.8, p < .01$), and efficacy predicted behavior for husbands, $t(44) = 2.2, p < .05$, but not wives, $t(45) = 1.1, p > .05$. In addition, the combination of efficacy and motivation accounted for 68% of the variance for husbands. These findings suggest that motivation may be of particular significance in the prediction of behavior, especially for wives since efficacy was not a significant predictor when motivation was taken into account.

It could be argued that spouses' marital satisfaction influences their judgments of efficacy and motivation and that the above results regarding the prediction of behavior are simply due to marital satisfaction. Thus, when marital satisfaction is taken into account in the prediction of behavior, efficacy and motivation may no longer be significant predictors. To rule out this possibility, satisfaction was also entered into the regression equation (see Table 3). Although efficacy no longer

Insert Table 3 about here

predicted behavior for wives, $t(44) = 0.8, p > .05$, or husbands, $t(43) = 1.8, p > .05$, motivation remained a strong predictor of behavior for wives, $t(44) = 3.9, p < .01$, and husbands, $t(43) = 4.3, p < .01$. This finding supports the contention that motivation is important in relation to behavior. Efficacy, on the other hand is insignificant in the prediction of behavior

when satisfaction is taken into account; it seems that spouses' levels of satisfaction influence their judgments of efficacy.

A third set of regression analyses was conducted in which affect served as the dependent variable. Efficacy predicted positive affect (for wives, $t(44) = 3.5, p < .01$, for husbands, $t(43) = 3.5, p < .01$), and negative affect (for wives, $t(44) = -3.9, p < .01$, for husbands, $t(42) = -2.1, p < .05$). Motivation predicted negative affect for husbands, $t(42) = -2.2, p < .05$, but not for wives, $t(44) = 0.7, p > .05$. Positive affect was not predicted by motivation for wives, $t(44) = 1.2, p > .05$, or husbands, $t(43) = 1.5, p > .05$. In the prediction of husbands' negative affect, efficacy and motivation together contributed 45% of the variance. These results point to the utility of efficacy in the prediction of positive and negative affect for husbands and wives. In contrast, motivation did not appear to be a useful predictor (except for husbands' negative affect). This analysis was repeated with satisfaction entered into the equation to control for its effects (see Table 4 and Table 5). Similar to

Insert Table 4 about here

the findings of the behavioral analysis, satisfaction influenced the results. Efficacy predicted positive affect for husbands, $t(42) = 2.7, p < .05$, but not wives, $t(43) = 1.6, p > .05$, and

Insert Table 5 about here

did not predict negative affect for husbands, $t(41) = -1.0$, $p > .05$, or wives, $t(43) = -1.8$, $p > .05$. Motivation did not predict positive affect for wives, $t(43) = 0.5$, $p > .05$, or husbands, $t(42) = 0.9$, $p > .05$, and did not predict negative affect for wives, $t(43) = 1.5$, $p > .05$, or husbands, $t(41) = -1.2$, $p > .05$.

In sum, when satisfaction was entered into the equation, efficacy only predicted husbands' positive affect. Satisfaction predicted negative affect for wives, $t(43) = -2.3$, $p < .05$, and husbands, $t(41) = -2.9$, $p < .01$. Thus, it appears that satisfaction not only influences the relationship between efficacy and affect, but also contributes unique variance to the prediction of affect. Based on this analysis, it seems that satisfaction accounts for the association obtained between motivation and affect. Nevertheless, the significant prediction of husbands' positive affect warrants further study into the possible causes of this inconsistent finding.

It was expected that a further analysis of efficacy and motivation could be done by crossing the two dimensions and forming four groups. The groups were formed by assigning spouses to a high or low efficacy group and a high or low motivation group using a median split of all of the same-sex spouses' summed responses for efficacy and motivation scores, respectively

(median for efficacy, wives = 37; husbands = 38; and median for motivation, wives = 18; husbands = 18). Those above the median were assigned to the high group and those below the median were assigned to the low group for both the efficacy and the motivation dimensions. However, the distribution of spouses falling into these four groups was highly skewed (see Table 6). Chi square tests showed that the efficacy and motivation

Insert Table 6 about here

dimensions were not independent of each other (for wives, $\chi^2(1, N = 39) = 11.29, p < .01$, for husbands, $\chi^2(1, N = 39) = 11.36, p < .01$). More specifically, spouses tended to be either in the high-efficacy, high-motivation group or the low-efficacy, low-motivation group. As a result, the sample sizes of two groups (i.e., the high-efficacy, low-motivation group and the low-efficacy, high-motivation group) were not large enough to do meaningful statistical analyses.

This finding suggests that even though efficacy and motivation can be distinguished conceptually, they appear to be related at the psychological level (see Table 7). Spouses may not separate entirely their judgments of efficacy from their

Insert Table 7 about here

judgments of motivation. This may be due to methodological difficulties in differentiating efficacy from motivation. Efficacy and motivation items were mixed on the same scale and included similar wording. It is possible that spouses were unable to completely distinguish the two constructs. If separate scales were used, and couples were given explicit definitions of efficacy and motivation, more independent judgments may have occurred.

In any event, efficacy and motivation appear to be useful in the study of marital conflict in that they both account for unique variance in satisfaction, behavior and affect. Although efficacy and motivation were related, if they were completely dependent constructs we would expect them to have the same correlations. But this was not the case; they predicted satisfaction, behavior and affect differently. This points to the utility of efficacy and motivation as separate constructs in the study of marital conflict. Moreover, if a more refined measure could further separate efficacy and motivation, it may yield clearer predictions.

Discussion

The measure of efficacy used in this study predicted satisfaction, behavior and affect. Although it did not do so consistently for husbands and wives, most of the changes made to improve the measurement of efficacy in marital conflict appear to be useful. These changes included considering efficacy solely as

a spouse's perceived sense of mastery and the exclusion of outcome judgments from the assessment of efficacy. Contrary to what was postulated, the inclusion of both self-efficacy and couple-efficacy judgments did not improve the measurement; self-efficacy judgments were sufficient alone.

The most straightforward conclusion to be drawn from this study concerns the prediction of behavior. As expected, spouses' motivation seems to be a key factor in this prediction; it significantly predicted behavior even when efficacy and satisfaction, two variables which share variance with motivation, were controlled. Thus, the relationship between spouses' judgments of motivation to resolve conflicts and their actual judgments of behavior seems to be strong. As predicted, spouses' efficacy judgments predicted behavior. However, it appears that marital satisfaction accounts for this relation: the prediction for efficacy disappeared once marital satisfaction was controlled.

An argument can be made that motivation may not only be important in the prediction of conflict-resolving behaviors in general, but may be related to the persistence of the behaviors. Fincham and Bradbury (1987), found that efficacy was not significantly related to persistence. One possible reason for this may be that motivation is what determines persistence. Preliminary evidence for this position is provided by the data from one of the questions used to assess behaviors in this study.

The question, "When it is difficult to resolve a conflict between us, I just try harder" seems to measure persistence directly. When this item alone was used as a measure of behavior, motivation predicted responses for wives, $t(44) = 4.0$, $p < .01$, and husbands, $t(43) = 4.3$, $p < .01$, with efficacy and satisfaction controlled.

Less straightforward, but clearly as important, is the relationship between efficacy and motivation, and marital satisfaction. As predicted, spouses' efficacy judgments emerge as important predictors of their marital satisfaction, and this relationship is not significantly influenced by their mood. Although efficacy emerged as a predictor of satisfaction, the relationship between spouses' motivation to resolve conflicts and their marital satisfaction is less clear. In the case of wives, motivation predicts satisfaction regardless of mood. But husbands' motivation is affected by mood and no longer predicts satisfaction when mood is controlled. Due to these inconsistent findings for husbands and wives, a definite conclusion at this point would be premature. Nevertheless the importance of motivation can not be ruled out and it should continue to be considered in future studies of marital satisfaction.

The conclusions which can be drawn concerning the prediction of negative affect are clear. Neither spouses' efficacy nor motivation judgments emerge as useful predictors. Instead, it is spouses' marital satisfaction which consistently predicts their

negative affect. The important predictors of positive affect are not as obvious. Motivation is clearly not a useful predictor but it is unclear whether efficacy is or not, due to the inconsistent results. Husbands' efficacy predicts positive affect regardless of their levels of satisfaction. But wives' efficacy judgments are affected by their marital satisfaction and do not predict positive affect with satisfaction taken into account. Thus, in the absence of further research on this topic, the utility of efficacy in the prediction of positive affect remains unclear.

In sum, spouses' efficacy and motivation judgments emerge as important factors in the study of marital conflict. Although they were both not consistently related to satisfaction, behavior and affect for husbands and wives, each seemed to be important in a specific realm; efficacy was useful in predicting satisfaction and motivation was useful in predicting behavior. Other relationships which need to be clarified, (e.g., the relationship between efficacy and positive affect and between motivation and satisfaction) may also reveal further instances in which efficacy and motivation have predictive utility. In light of these findings, it seems that a thorough understanding of marital conflict demands an assessment of spouses' perceived sense of mastery and their motivation to resolve marital conflicts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although one of the strongest conclusions which can be drawn concerning motivation is its utility in the prediction of

spouses' behavior judgments, we must use caution in interpreting the findings because the 2-item behavioral measure used was far from optimal. Future studies should employ a more extensive measure of behavior which may include an assessment of persistence and overt behavior.

It has been suggested (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987) that spouses' efficacy judgments include global expectations of mastery as well as mastery in specific conflict situations (e.g., communication, sex and money). It may be important to determine whether global efficacy is an overall reflection of efficacy in specific situations or is qualitatively different. If global and specific efficacy are not related, a different pattern of findings may emerge when situational efficacy is assessed. The measure of efficacy in this study concentrated on global efficacy but failed to assess situational efficacy.

Past marital research on efficacy has not addressed the issue of causal direction. Do spouses' beliefs in their abilities to resolve marital conflicts influence their satisfaction with the marriage? Or does spouses' marital satisfaction influence their beliefs about their abilities to resolve conflicts in the marriage? And how does motivation effect this relationship? Although the experimental manipulation of couples efficacy and motivation might be optimal for examining this question, such procedures pose serious ethical problems. Consequently, a longitudinal study may be the best available means

of examining causality. This type of study could follow the course of the spouses' marriage and examine the effects of efficacy and motivation on their satisfaction over time.

A further conceptual refinement of the constructs of efficacy and motivation and the relationship between the two may be necessary for a more complete understanding of marital conflict. Bandura (1977b) stressed that a complete assessment of efficacy should include an analysis of the strength, magnitude and generality of efficacy. Whether or not this same claim holds for marital relationships remains to be determined. Also, investigation of the determinants of motivation may uncover additional variables which are important in the study of marital conflict (i.e., outcome expectations).

This paper provides preliminary evidence which suggests that further study in the area of marital conflict should include an assessment of both efficacy and motivation. Researchers should also keep in mind some of the suggestions for future research previously outlined. If future studies utilize the improvements made in the assessment of efficacy and address the questions raised by this study, their findings may not only increase our knowledge in the realm of marital conflict but may bring some clarity to the complexity of marital relationships.

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Table 1

The Prediction of Behavior by Crossing Efficacy and Motivation

Dimensions

	<u>Efficacy</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
<u>High</u>	High Conflict- Resolving Behavior	Moderate Conflict- Resolving Behavior
<u>Motivation</u>		
<u>Low</u>	Moderate Conflict- Resolving Behavior	Low Conflict- Resolving Behavior

Table 2

The Relative Contributions of Efficacy, Motivation and Affect in
the Prediction of Marital Satisfaction

	<u>Beta</u>	<u>R Square</u>
Wives		0.70**
Efficacy	0.58**	
Motivation	0.31*	
Positive Affect (PANAS)	-0.06	
Negative Affect (PANAS)	-0.03	
Husbands		0.63**
Efficacy	0.30*	
Motivation	0.24	
Positive Affect (PANAS)	0.20	
Negative Affect (PANAS)	-0.21	

**p < .01

*p < .05

Table 3

The Relative Contributions of Efficacy, Motivation and Satisfaction in The Prediction of Behavior

	<u>Beta</u>	<u>R Square</u>
Wives		0.53**
Efficacy	0.15	
Motivation	0.60**	
Satisfaction	0.02	
Husbands		0.68**
Efficacy	0.16	
Motivation	0.59**	
Satisfaction	0.05	

** p < .01

* p < .05

Table 4

The Relative Contributions of Efficacy, Motivation and Satisfaction in The Prediction of Positive Affect

	<u>Beta</u>	<u>R Square</u>
Wives		0.50**
Efficacy	0.31	
Motivation	0.08	
Satisfaction	0.37	
Husbands		0.55**
Efficacy	0.44*	
Motivation	0.14	
Satisfaction	0.24	

** p < .01

* p < .05

Table 5

The Relative Contributions of Efficacy, Motivation and Satisfaction in the Prediction of Negative Affect

	<u>Beta</u>	<u>R Square</u>
Wives		0.42**
Efficacy	-0.37	
Motivation	0.27	
Satisfaction	-0.49*	
Husbands		0.54**
Efficacy	-0.16	
Motivation	-0.19	
Satisfaction	-0.46**	

** p < .01

* p < .05

Table 6

The Distribution of Spouses Falling into High and Low Groups of Efficacy and Motivation (wives/husbands)

		<u>Motivation</u>	
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
<u>Efficacy</u>	<u>High</u>	16/14	4/3
	<u>Low</u>	4/4	15/18

Table 7

Correlations Between Independent and Dependent Variables
for Wives (above diagonal) and Husbands (below diagonal) **

	Eff.	Mot.	Sat.	Beh.	P PA.	N PA.	P Af.	N Af.
Efficacy	***	.71	.83	.58	.63	-.60	.70	-.61
Motivation	.72	***	.69	.70	.61	-.40	.60	-.37
Satisfaction	.68	.68	***	.52	.58	-.54	.71	-.66
Behavior	.74	.85	.68	***	.69	-.42	.68	-.37
Positive PANAS	.61	.67	.68	.79	***	-.70	.71	-.41
Negative PANAS	-.48	-.50	-.56	-.55	-.56	***	-.62	.58
Positive Affect	.77	.70	.74	.77	.63	-.50	***	-.73
Negative Affect	-.61	-.61	-.70	-.72	-.58	.58	-.75	***

** all correlations: $p < .01$