Fort Hays State University
FHSU Scholars Repository

Master's Theses   Graduate School

Spring 2011

Conflict And Satisfaction In Romantic Relationships

Meghan Moland
Fort Hays State University, meghan.moland@nebraska.gov

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholars.fhsu.edu/theses

Part of the Psychology Commons

CONFLICT AND SATISFACTION IN

ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

being

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty

of the Fort Hays State University in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master of Science

by

Meghan M. Moland

B.S., Fort Hays State University

Date _____   Approved _____
                                                                        Major Professor

                                                        Approved _____
                                                                        Chair, Graduate Council

The research described in this thesis utilized human subjects. The thesis prospectus was therefore examined by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the Psychology Department, Fort Hays State University, and found to comply with Title 45, Subtitle A – Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, General Administration; Part 46 – Protection of Human Subjects.

_____
Date

_____
Ethics Committee Chairperson

ABSTRACT

Past research regarding the link between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction have been consistent; each partner‟s level of relationship satisfaction is positively related to the frequency with which both partners use constructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as agreement, compromise, and humor) and negatively related to the frequency with which each partner uses destructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as conflict engagement, withdrawal, and defensiveness) (Kurdek, 1995).

The purpose of this research was to examine the links between conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships that are one or more years in duration. Six self-report indices (the Relationship Assessment Scale - RAS, Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory - CRSI, Ineffective Arguing Inventory - IAI, Assessing Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire - ARCQ, Relationship Styles Questionnaire - RSQ, and Last Argument Questionnaire - LAQ) were administered to 235 participants.

Several significant findings were obtained. Fifty six percent of the variance in relationship satisfaction was explained by all the conflict measures (CRSI, IAI, and RSQ). Females scored significantly higher than males on conflict engagement. For couples with more severe perpetual problems, Satisfaction was lower on the Relationship Assessment Scale. Married participants scored significantly higher than participants who were in a dating relationship on both conflict engagement and withdrawal.

Post-graduates (those earning a Master‟s degree and above) scored significantly higher than those who either attended and/or graduated from college on relationship satisfaction and positive problem solving, and lower on ineffective arguing. Participants

who reported a medium income level scored significantly higher on conflict withdrawal

than those who reported they earned a low income.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF APPENDIXES

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is an inevitable part of everyone"s life, and that is even more true for those who live together in dating, intimate, and marital relationships (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000). The closer and more interdependent the relationship (from a next-door neighbor, to a roommate, a close friend or romantic partner), the more opportunities there are for conflict, and the more trivial (minor) complaints can become significant ones, involving more intense feelings. The fact that conflict inevitably exists in intimate and marital relationships is not what differentiates satisfied (functional) and dissatisfied (dysfunctional) couples. A review of contemporary research seems to indicate that what makes relationships satisfying (healthy) or unsatisfying (unhealthy) is the way in which conflict occurs and how it is managed or resolved.

Definitions, theories and measures of conflict were explored with respect to romantic relationships, as was definitions, theories and measures of satisfaction. Existing integration of these concepts in the literature will be reviewed. Conflict and satisfaction were investigated to see where they were related and whether one predicted the other.

Romantic Relationships

For the purpose of this study, a romantic relationship was defined as any couple; that is, two individuals from either gender who are married, engaged, or have been dating for at least one year. This minimal time period is used because it is believed that conflict is not usually influential in the early stages of a relationship (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). Christensen and Walczynski (1997) argue that once a relationship has been well established, conflict is the most important proximal factor affecting satisfaction in the relationship, and ultimately, its course but that it is not usually influential in the

1

early stages of a relationship. Instead, the factors that attract two people to each other and the pleasure they take in each other are much more likely than conflict to determine whether or not a relationship initially develops. However, once a relationship has been established, the nature and level of conflict become important determinants.

Research on premarital relationships have shown that the length of premarital relationships and the amount of time that couples were engaged were positively related to the stability of marriage (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Cate, Levin, & Richmond, 2002). This suggests that people need to spend sufficient time before marriage developing essential processes that will enhance later marriage. Only a few studies provide a glimpse of the premarital factors and processes that bode well for later marriage. These studies point to the importance of the extent to which couples experience conflict and negativity in the premarital period (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995; Huston, 1994).

Huston (1994) examined data from 168 married couples, noting that couples who experienced more conflict premaritally were less in love and less satisfied after they married. Additionally, couples involved in courtships filled with considerable conflict, compared with those that were relatively harmonious, were as courting couples less in love and more ambivalent about their relationships. Premarital problems, particularly ambivalence, conflict, and a slower progression toward commitment, were identified as important elements of the premarital relationship predictive of marital satisfaction and love.

Carstensen et al. (1995) found evidence for both stability and change in the nature of the marital relationship as it unfolds in later adulthood. Specifically, in older couples, the resolution of conflict was less emotionally negative and more affectionate than in

middle-aged married couples. It is important to note that much of the literature

regarding conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships utilizes married couples.

However as stated in an earlier section, for the purpose of this study a romantic

relationship was defined as any couple; (that is, two individuals from either gender) who

are married, engaged, or have been dating for at least one year. According to the United

States Census Bureau (2005-2007), 53 percent of the US population fifteen years and

older are married. However, unmarried couples are still worthy of studying as they make

up a considerable amount of the population in the U.S. For instance, 5.4 percent of US

households were unmarried partner households with just under 5 percent in the state of

Kansas. In addition, it is difficult to estimate the number of seriously dating couples who

are not living together. In the current study, a convenience sample of mostly college

students was used making it likely that the majority of these young adults would fit the

above classification.

<div align="center">Satisfaction</div>

According to the literature, satisfaction seems to be synonymous with the terms:

stable, healthy, functional and nondistressed. According to Rusbult (1983) satisfaction

can also be defined as "generally having positive feelings about one‟s

partner/relationship" (p. 102). The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) will be used as

a measure of romantic relationship satisfaction in the current study. It measures general

satisfaction in addition to how well a partner meets one‟s needs, how well the

relationship compares to others, and one‟s regrets about the relationship, for example,

one item asks, how often do you wish you hadn‟t gotten into this relationship?"

(Hendrick, 1988).

Relationship satisfaction also has important implications for relationship success and stability (Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998). Findings revealed that self and partner communication variables (such as empathy, self-disclosure and relational competence) and love orientations (dynamic characteristics of a person created by some mix of personality structure, past experience, and current relationship interactions) were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction.

Conflict

Literature states that conflict appears to be synonymous with the words dissatisfied, unstable, unhealthy, dysfunctional, and distressed. In addition, a variety of conditions have been used as indicators of conflict situations in scholarly writing. Some definitions of conflict are quite simplistic or broad, for example Lulofs and Cahn (2000) indicate that conflict is two or more competing responses to a single event, or differences between and among individuals, or mutual hostility between or among groups, or a problem to be solved. Most conflict definitions emphasize the role of perception in conflict, that is, conflicts arise when people perceive that their activities or goals are incompatible with those of the other party. In conflict, people believe that their interests are threatened by the actions of the other person. Conflict can also be defined as "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another" (Peterson, 1983, p. 365).

Signs of conflict can include: fighting over repetitive issues, knowing how an argument is going to end even before it is over, ending an argument without resolving the issue at hand, and ending the argument with neither partner feeling that they have been given a fair hearing. A major aspect of many approaches to couple therapy involves

trying to encourage partners to resolve their differences, i.e., deal with their conflict

(Cramer, 2000). Specifically, Stanley, Markman and Whitton (2002) indicate:

> From a clinical perspective, it seems wise to help couples explore topics
>
> that lead to intense arguments very carefully, looking for an understanding
>
> of what is at stake, and what is being symbolized by the content, and what
>
> the process serves to accomplish in the relationship (p. 671-672).

But what exactly is marital conflict? And how does it impact relationships? A

review of the literature indicates several variables that merit further discussion.

In particular, the nature of conflict has been described as being either

perpetual or solvable, with poor adaptation to perpetual problems seen as being

predictive of marital dissolution (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999).

Gottman (1999) and Gottman & Silver (1999) found that all marital conflicts fall

into one of these two categories. Perpetual problems are those that have been in a

couple"s marriage for many years and usually have to do with differences in their

personality or needs that are fundamental to a partner"s core definition of self.

Perpetual problems are a part of the couple"s lives forever, in some form or

another. Solvable problems seem less painful or intense than perpetual ones

because the focus is only on a particular dilemma or situation and there is no

underlying conflict that"s fueling the dispute. Additionally, solvable problems can

also be resolved.

The majority of marital conflicts (69% according to Gottman, 1999; Gottman &

Silver, 1999) fall into the category of perpetual problems and will have no real solutions.

Therefore, instead of solving these perpetual problems, what seems to be important is

whether or not a couple can establish a dialogue with their perpetual problems. This dialogue is the adaptation to the persistent, perpetual problem. In unstable marriages, perpetual problems eventually ruin the relationship. Instead of coping with the problem effectively, the couple gets "gridlocked" over it. Some signs of gridlock include: the conflict makes each partner feel rejected by the other partner, the subject keeps getting talked about but no headway is made, when the subject is discussed each partner ends up feeling more frustrated and hurt (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999).

As stated above, in unstable marriages perpetual problems can eventually ruin the relationship. Instead of coping with the problem effectively, the couple gets gridlocked over it and eventually the "four horseman" (Gottman & Silver, 1999, p. 132) become increasingly more present. The "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" (Gottman, 1999, p. 41-48) are a certain kind of negativity that are lethal to a relationship. The Four Horsemen occur in the following order: criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. Criticism is any statement that implies that there is something globally wrong with one"s partner, something that is probably a lasting aspect of the partner"s character. Criticism quite naturally elicits defensiveness. Defensiveness is any attempt to defend oneself from a perceived attack and usually includes denying responsibility for the problems, and this fuels the flames of marital conflict because it says the other person is the culprit. Contempt is any statement or nonverbal behavior that puts oneself on a higher plane than one"s partner. The following types of contempt; sarcasm, cynicism, name-calling, eye-rolling, sneering, mockery, and hostile humor tend to convey disgust. Inevitably, contempt leads to more conflict rather than to reconciliation. Next, stonewalling occurs when the listener withdraws from the interaction. In general, men are

consistently more likely to stonewall than women and women are more likely than men to criticize. In unstable relationships these "four horsemen" become present when the partners argue and when humor and affection fade. Each person becomes more entrenched in their own position and they gradually feel physiologically overwhelmed and eventually become emotionally disengaged.

However, couples who learn to have a dialogue with their perpetual problem understand that the conflict will never go away or ever be fully resolved. Despite their differences these couples remain very satisfied with their marriages because they found a way to deal with their disagreement so it doesn't overwhelm them.

<div align="center">Conflict Resolution</div>

This isn't to say that solvable problems should be ignored. The way in which couples resolve everyday sorts of disagreements as well as chronic issues has also been addressed in the literature and unique patterns of conflict resolution can be identified for each partner. Kurdek (1994) has determined that "ineffective arguing" is a global, unidimensional couple interactional pattern. Signals of such a pattern including fighting over repetitive issues, knowing how an argument is going to end even before it is over, ending an argument without resolving the issue at hand, and ending the argument with neither partner feeling that they have been given a fair hearing. This pattern of ineffective arguing is important because it has been found to be a negative component to both relationship maintenance and relationship stability (Kurdek, 1994).

Some of the more common styles of conflict resolution are as follows. Positive problem solving such as compromise and negotiation is the ideal. Conflict engagement can include personal attacks and even losing control. Another style, withdrawal, could be

exemplified by refusing to discuss the issue further and/or tuning the other partner out.

The preceding two styles often occur together and have been classified as a "demand-

withdraw" pattern by Christensen and Heavey (1990 & 1993) in which the more one

partner engages (or demands), the more the other is overwhelmed and withdraws and vice

versa. Finally, compliance is a style of conflict resolution in which one partner gives in

and/or stops defending their position (Kurdek, 1994).

> Couples simply have different styles of conflict. Some avoid fights at all costs,
>
> some fight a lot, and some are able to „talk out" their differences and find a
>
> compromise without ever raising their voices. No one style is necessarily better
>
> than the other – *as long as the style works for both people*. (Gottman & Silver,
>
> 1999, p. 15)

Just how couples should best go about resolving their conflicts, whether they are

perpetual or not is still somewhat unresolved in the literature as will be explored in more

depth later. However, conflict in relationships does seem to be related in some fashion to

satisfaction.

<div align="center">Conflict and Satisfaction</div>

Distressed versus Nondistressed Couples

Distressed couples are usually functioning at lower levels; they are often unhappy,

dissatisfied, maladjusted, or unstable. For example, Genshaft (1980) found that distressed

couples are more defensive than are nondistressed couples. Birchler, Weiss, and Vincent

(1975) obtained data that showed that distressed couples tend to engage in fewer positive

behavioral interactions and more negative behavioral interactions during casual

conversation and problem solving than nondistressed couples. Distressed couples also

emitted fewer pleases and more displeases, engaged in more conflicts and fewer recreational activities together. Gottman, Markman and Notarius (1977) observed that distressed couples are more likely to begin a discussion by cross-complaining (i.e., returning a complaint in response to a complaint instead of acknowledging what the other person said), followed by negative exchanges and less problem solving. Margolin and Wampold (1981) reported less problem solving, and more verbal and nonverbal negative behaviors in distressed couples than in nondistressed couples, although there were male-female differences in communication conflict patterns such as wives were more likely to demonstrate nonverbal positive and verbal negative behaviors than their husbands. Additionally, women appeared to exhibit greater emotional expressiveness (e.g., smile/laugh, complain, criticize), whereas men relied on factual explanations (excuse) or withdrawal (not tracking).

Observational studies of conflict in couples also support a link between the nature and intensity of conflict and level of relationship satisfaction as was found by Christensen and Walczynski (1997). In these studies, researchers typically have each couple discuss an area of disagreement, and the couple"s interaction is coded by observers along various dimensions. Results from such studies indicate that the communications of distressed couples differ in quality and in intensity from those of nondistressed couples. Among the most consistent findings in this area are that distressed partners criticize and disagree with each other more often than do nondistressed partners, and that they reciprocate negative behaviors to a greater extent than do members of nondistressed couples (Birchler, et al., 1975; Gottman, et al., 1977; Margolin & Wampold, 1981).

According to Kurdek (1994), one of the major limitations of observational studies of couple conflict is that they utilize very small and often nonrepresentative samples. In fact, some of the inconsistent findings in observational studies regarding the types of conflict resolution strategies that are linked to declines in relationship satisfaction over time have been attributed to biased samples (Gottman, 1993).

Gottman (1999) and Gottman & Silver (1999) found that in less stable marriages conflict discussion can trigger flooding. When this occurs, partners feel overwhelmed both emotionally (they most likely think thoughts of righteous indignation or innocent victimhood) and physically (heart races, sweating increases, and breath is held). Diffuse Physiological Arousal (DPA) is the body"s general alarm mechanism in which many systems are simultaneously activated to perceived dangers. Physiological alterations (such as heart rate speeds up to and beyond 100 beats per minute, blood pressure increases, the limbic system activates and fight or flight reactions become more likely as the cortex is engaged to evaluate the stimulus conditions so the body can take appropriate action) can and do happen during marital conflict. When marital conflict gives rise to DPA – the physiological consequences are quite negative. Short term, couples experience a reduced ability to process information (because it is harder to attend to what the other is saying). Even in the best marriages it is hard to listen during DPA circumstances. There is less access to new learning and greater access to habitual behaviors and cognitions. This is why the fight/flight responses become more accessible and creative-problem solving is not used. The male cardiovascular system is more reactive than the female and slower to recover from stress; therefore men are more easily overwhelmed by marital conflict than their wives. Most marriages (including healthy, happy ones) follow a

comparable pattern of conflict in which the wife, who is better able to handle stress, brings up sensitive issues. The husband, who is not as able to cope with it, will attempt to avoid getting into the subject.

Gottman (1994a) claims that the couples need to soothe themselves and each other when they feel physiologically aroused. The best methods include (a) withdrawing from the interaction, that is taking a scheduled break (at least 20 minutes without negative arousal-sustaining cognitions, and a scheduled time to return, with a commitment to continue the discussion); and, (b) relaxation either separately, or, even better, with one another.

Christensen and Walczynski (1997) reviewed several diary and self-report studies that have focused on the amount of conflict in relationships, and have found that distressed spouses experience more frequent conflicts than nondistressed spouses. For example, Schaap, Buunk, and Kerkstra (1988) suggest that higher frequencies of conflict about certain topics (for example: communication, sexuality, and characteristics such as personality) of the partner in distressed relationships may indicate that such problems remain unresolved in these relationships. For example distressed spouses reported that they very often have conflicts about the fact that they talk too little with one another, and about the way in which they talk with each other (not listening, frequent interruptions and not showing much interest in one another). The conflicts of distressed couples very often concern the frequency of sexual intercourse, the way in which sexuality takes place and the complaint that the wife doesn"t take enough initiative in the sexual relationship. Distressed spouses report that they very often have conflicts about the fact that one

partner tries to dominate the other, doesn"t stick to agreements, doesn"t pay attention to the other and concerns that the wife does not receive enough room for personal growth.

Billings (1979) noted that effective conflict resolution has been identified as being crucial for the maintenance of marital satisfaction. The communicational interactions of maritally distressed and nondistressed couples while engaged in conflict resolution tasks were compared; analyses of ratings from two behavioral observation systems indicated that distressed couples made significantly more negative and fewer positive, cognitive and problem-solving acts. Distressed couples evidenced more reciprocity of negative communications as compared with nondistressed couples. Margolin (1988) summarizes the differences between distressed and nondistressed couples with respect to conflict as follows: "The conflict style of distressed couples includes a higher frequency and longer chains of punitive behaviors, as well as less productive outcomes." (p. 197)

Theories of Conflict and Satisfaction

There are two basic psychological concepts which have been applied to explain the connection of conflict and satisfaction, interdependence theory and self-fulfilling prophecy theory and while both have received mixed results in the literature, they represent opposing perspectives. However, research relevant to the plausibility of either causal relation has been inconsistent. This has been due to methodological and conceptual limitations of the studies (i.e., small sample size, assessing spouses who had been married for a short time). In addition, marital conflict from a two-partner perspective had not been studied comprehensively versus one partner"s perspective and not controlling the possibility that change in the frequency with which conflict resolution styles were used was linked to change in marital satisfaction.

Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory is based on the notion of causal attribution; that is, how we explain to ourselves why something happened, not unlike a cost benefit analysis; it is like an investment model of relationship satisfaction. It has been applied to relational conflict by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) to argue that individuals should be more satisfied with their relationships when they provide high rewards and low costs that exceed their generalized expectations. Thus, if individuals share many common interests with their romantic partner (i.e., derive numerous rewards) with whom they seldom argue (i.e., incur few costs), and expect little from their romantic involvements more generally (i.e., have a low comparison level), then they should be relatively satisfied with their involvement (Rusbult, 1983).

In sum, this theory would posit that, in relationships, the increased use of constructive resolution styles (such as positive problem solving) and decreased use of more negative ones (such as conflict engagement, withdrawal and/or compliance) causes satisfaction; that is, satisfaction is the result of the net coping style. There is longitudinal data consistent with this causal relation and couples have been shown to be more satisfied in their relationships because the benefits outweigh the costs (Kurdek, 1995). Furthermore, several empirical studies (Billings, 1979; Christensen & Heavey, 1990, 1993; Crohan, 1992; Gottman, 1994a, 1998; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Greeff, & DeBruyne, 2000; Kurdek, 1994; Stanley, et al., 2002) discussed below seem to fit with this interdependence model, at least on a conceptual level in that they all focus on satisfaction impacting the coping style used.

Self-fulfilling Prophecy Theory

On the other hand, the assumption that the level of marital satisfaction is the determining factor in the frequency with which certain conflict resolution styles are used is based on the self-fulfilling prophecy theory (Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977). This suggests that one"s attitudes (for example the level of satisfaction with the relationship) provide a psychological environment that elicits behaviors (like conflict resolution styles) that reinforce and are consistent with the initial attitude. Specifically, this stance differs from the interdependence model in that relationship satisfaction is seen as the determining cause in using increased constructive strategies while dissatisfaction causes the use of more negative strategies. In sum, self-fulfilling prophecy theory states that the coping style is the end result of level of satisfaction in the relationship.

There is support for the notion that level of marital satisfaction first and foremost determines conflict resolution style. For instance, satisfied couples learn to have a dialogue about their problems (Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999). On the other hand, dissatisfied couples tend to engage in ineffective conflict resolution styles (such as being more defensive) (Birchler et al., 1975; Genshaft, 1980; Gottman et al., 1977; Margolin & Wampold, 1981; Schaap et al., 1988). Therefore, the studies above lend credence to self-fulfilling prophecy theory.

Conflict Resolution Styles & Satisfaction

Despite the controversy above; in practical terms, the causation isn"t as important as the connection. Most counselors agree that conflict management affects satisfaction whether indirectly or directly. Conflict management is one of the most important determinants of the well-being of the relationship (Crohan, 1992). There is longitudinal

data to support the notion that conflictual interactions predict marital dissatisfaction and breakup (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). Stanley et al. (2002) also found that "negative interactions" (escalation, invalidation, withdrawal) have a potent association with thoughts about divorce. Whether withdrawal from conflict is done by males or females, it was found to be strongly associated with poor quality relationships. These findings also suggested that bilateral withdrawal is also more likely a sign of distress than of successful coping.

Some research on relationship satisfaction has investigated more specific patterns of responding to conflict among couples. Table 1 shows how terms found in the literature describing conflict are distinct but similar concepts.

Table 1. Comparison of Equivalent Conflict Terms Found in the Literature

Kurdek (1994)	Gottman (1994a, 1994b)	Christensen & Heavey (1990, 1993)	Greeff & DeBruyne (2000)
Conflict Engaging	Nonregulated: Hostile-Engaged Regulated: Volatile	Demand	Competitive Conflict Management
Positive Problem Solving	Regulated: Validating	- -	Collaborative Conflict Management
Withdrawal	Nonregulated: Hostile-Detached Regulated: Avoidant	Withdrawal	Conflict Avoidant
Compliance	- -	- -	Conflict Avoidant

Note: - - indicates no equivalent term is used by these authors.

Studies range from exploration of the typically detrimental demand-withdraw pattern (Christensen & Heavey, 1990), to the relative success of regulated versus nonregulated couples and their typical patterns (Gottman, 1994a; 1994b), to the rates of

satisfaction among collaborative, conflict-avoidant, and competitive couples (Greeff &

DeBruyne, 2000) and among positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal,

and compliance (Kurdek, 1994; 1995).

While several conflict resolution styles have been identified that have bearing on

satisfaction in relationships, the demand-withdraw pattern will be discussed first.

Christensen and Heavey (1990) discovered this pattern in which the demander (usually

the woman) pressures the other through emotional requests, criticism, and complaints.

The withdrawer (usually the man) retreats through defensiveness and passive inaction.

Another study by these same authors (1993) examined the predictability of the "demand-

withdraw" pattern of interaction and showed that over a two and a half year period, the

extent of "wife demand – husband withdraw" interaction at the onset predicted a decline

in marital satisfaction even after initial levels of marital satisfaction were statistically

controlled. Gottman and Silver (1999) similarly found that harsh start-up (escalating from

neutral to negative affect) by the wife was associated with marital instability and divorce.

Women (especially in ailing marriages, but actually in all marriages) are consistently

more likely to criticize than men, while men, on the other hand, are consistently more

likely to stonewall (or withdraw emotionally) than women. Other broader patterns have

also emerged in the literature suggesting substantial links between how individuals

approach their conflicts affects their satisfaction in their relationship.

However, Gottman (1994a, 1994b, 1998) also argued more broadly that the

relational style a couple employs, especially while handling conflict, can be a strong

indicator of the length of their marriage as well as their feelings of satisfaction in that

marriage. According to Gottman (1994a) there are two kinds of marital types (based on

the domains of health, physiology, behavior, affect, marital satisfaction, and the risk

for marital dissolution), regulated and nonregulated; and that each type utilizes

characteristic conflict styles. Regulated couples are those who utilize more positive

communication behaviors than negative. Nonregulated couples are, "those for whom the

balance between positive and negative affective behaviors fails to increasingly favor

positive affective behaviors over time, have marriages that appear, in many ways, to be

much more dysfunctional than those of regulated couples" (Gottman, 1994a, p.106).

More specifically, regulated couples generally exhibit three kinds of conflict

styles: volatile, validating and avoiding (Gottman, 1994a, 1994b). Volatile couples have

relationships that are highly emotional with extreme levels of both negative and positive

affect, they exhibit active engagement in conflict, and often have high relationship

satisfaction despite a higher level of defensiveness than was found among the other types,

particularly among wives. Validating couples usually engage in conference-type

discussions and end arguments understanding each other better than before the conflict;

they tend to be more responsive to each other. Finally, avoidant couples are conflict

minimizers, and they commonly agree to disagree.

Two conflict styles typically emerge in nonregulated couples, hostile-engaged and

hostile-detached. Hostile-engaged couples are characterized by a great deal of direct

engagement in conflict and an attentive listener, and by a great deal of defensiveness,

usually on the part of both people. Hostile-detached couples seem quite detached and

emotionally uninvolved with one another, but they get into brief episodes of reciprocated

attack and defensiveness. Gottman (1994a) found some evidence of greater negativity,

(particularly contempt and disgust as well as greater detachment of both husbands and wives) in the hostile-detached compared with the hostile-engaged group.

Gottman (1994a) also examined the gender differences in regulated and nonregulated couples. Husbands and wives in the nonregulated and regulated groups differed in anger and whining, but only nonregulated wives showed more disgust/contempt, indicating a higher level of rejection of the relationship. More specifically, nonregulated couples were more conflict engaging, more defensive, more stubborn, and more withdrawn than regulated couples (Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Additionally, nonregulated wives showed less positive affect which is interesting because wives are typically much more likely than husbands to take responsibility for regulating the affective balance and keeping the couple on the problem-solving task during the problem-area marital interaction.

Gottman (1994a) found that in the realm of quality of the marital relationship, nonregulated couples reported lower levels of marital satisfaction (both at the time they were classified and four years later), and nonregulated wives rated marital problems as being more severe. Over the period of this study, nonregulated couples were also more likely to consider marital dissolution and to actually separate than were regulated couples. Likewise, while some kinds of conflict engagement (such as the disagreement and anger exchanges found in volatile couples) may be functional for a marriage longitudinally, conflict that is indicative of defensiveness, stubbornness, and withdrawal, may be dysfunctional over time (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

An interesting study by Greeff and DeBruyne (2000) looked at satisfaction across three conflict management styles. It was found that spouses were most satisfied with their

marriage when they engaged in a collaborative conflict management style with behavior that is assertive and cooperative (such as confronting disagreement and problem solving to find solutions). On the other hand, the conflict-avoidance management style, with passive and uncooperative behavior (such as withdrawal and failure to take a position in a conflict situation) tended to be associated with low marital satisfaction. Finally, in couples where one or both of the spouses used a competitive conflict management style with assertive and uncooperative behaviors (such as forcing behavior and win-lose arguing), the lowest marital satisfaction was reported.

Discussed in an earlier section, Kurdek (1994) introduces four distinct conflict management strategies positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance. Findings regarding the link between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction have been consistent; each spouse's level of marital satisfaction is positively related to the frequency with which both spouses use constructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as agreement, compromise, and humor) and negatively related to the frequency with which each spouse uses destructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as conflict engagement, withdrawal, and defensiveness) (Kurdek, 1995). Frequent use of positive problem solving was linked to increases in relationship satisfaction, whereas frequent use of conflict engagement (wife) and withdrawal (husband) was linked to decreases in relationship satisfaction; compliance (to conform to another person's demand/request) failed to predict relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994).

In general, there does appear to be a link between relational conflict style and outcome. Specifically, couples with positive problem solving styles and who dialogue well with their perpetual problems are associated with higher levels of positive outcomes.

Those with other problem solving styles (such as conflict engagement, compliance, withdrawal) and who experience gridlock and/or criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling are associated with higher levels of negative outcomes in their relationships. Studies reviewed above clarify the link between relational conflict and satisfaction. However, it remains unclear as to whether a certain style predicts satisfaction or if initial satisfaction levels predict conflict resolution style.

<div align="center">The Present Study</div>

The present study was designed to assess the relation of conflict and satisfaction in relationships (or visa versa, i.e., how one"s satisfaction affects their conflict). In particular, it will help to determine whether certain conflict resolution styles affect satisfaction in relationships (conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance). Research questions and hypotheses are listed below.

1). What is the relation between conflict and satisfaction? In general, what is the relation between conflict (as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory; CRSI, Ineffective Arguing Inventory; IAI, and Relationship Style Questionnaire; RSQ) and satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale; RAS)? A multiple regression was used to determine whether there is a relationship between conflict and satisfaction with the RAS scale score functioning as the criterion variable and the CRSI, IAI, and RSQ scale scores as predictor variables. Correlations were also run to examine the relationship between satisfaction and conflict.

2.) How does the presence of perpetual problems affect conflict and satisfaction?

a). Perpetual problems related to conflict (this is counter to Gottman"s assertion). Correlations were used to determine whether there was a relationship between

perpetual problems on the Assessing Your Relationship Conflicts

Questionnaire and conflict resolution style on the CRSI.

b). Perpetual problems predict satisfaction. A correlation was used to determine

whether there was a relationship between perpetual problems on the Assessing

Your Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire and satisfaction on the Relationship

Assessment Scale.

3.) What is the effect of gender on conflict style, amount of arguing, and satisfaction? A

MANOVA will be run to determine to following hypotheses:

a). Based on Christensen and Heavey"s (1990, 1993) demand withdraw pattern, it

was predicted that women would be more likely to report using a conflict

engagement style of conflict and that men would be more likely to report using a

withdrawal style of conflict as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles

Inventory (CRSI) subscales.

b). It was predicted that there are gender differences in level of conflict as

measured by Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI) scores.

c). It was predicted that there are gender differences in relationship satisfaction as

measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS).

*For a, b, and c: gender served as the independent variable and the two subscales

of the CRSI (conflict engagement and withdrawal), the IAI and the RAS

functioned as dependent variables.

4.) How do demographic variables other than gender impact conflict style (Conflict

Resolution Styles Inventory; CRSI), conflict level (Ineffective Arguing Inventory; IAI)

and satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale; RAS)? Six multiple regressions were

used to explore the relation between these measures (CRSI, IAI, and RAS) and age, number of children, and length of relationship. Conflict style, conflict level and satisfaction served as the criterion variables while age, number of children, and length of relationship functioned as the predictor variables.

5). How does relationship status (dating, engaged, or married), level of education and level of income impact conflict style (Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory; CRSI), conflict level (Ineffective Arguing Inventory; IAI) and satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale; RAS)? Three separate MANOVAs were run to determine the impact of (a) relationship status, (b) level of education and (c) level of income on conflict style, conflict level, and satisfaction. Relationship status, level of education, and level of income served as the independent variables while the four subscales of the CRSI, the IAI and the RAS functioned as dependent variables.

METHOD

Participants

Participants included partnered adult students, staff, and faculty from a small, midwestern university who were recruited by email and classes. An adult aged community sample was also recruited via flyers in attempts to make the sample more generalizable. Participants needed to meet one requirement: they must have been in a serious relationship because it is believed that conflict is not usually influential in the early stages of a relationship (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). A serious relationship was defined as couples who are married, engaged, or have been dating for at least one year. At least one member of a couple needed to complete the on-line questionnaire.

Initially, 285 individuals participated in this study. In an effort to remove as many confounding variables from the sample as possible, many participants were purged from consideration for purposes of data analysis. For example, twenty-nine participants were excluded from the data as they did not meet the minimum one year relationship length requirement. An additional twenty-one participants were excluded from the sample as they did not complete all of the survey instruments. All remaining participants were included in data analysis (N=235).

Measures

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic questions were asked to determine trends in length and type of relationship and conflict issues; gender, age, highest level of education, current occupation, current annual income, religious/spiritual preference(s), race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, length of relationship (in years), type of relationship (dating, engaged, or

married), number of times the person has been married before the current relationship, and number of children (See Appendix A).

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

The Relationship Assessment Scale is a measure of romantic relationship satisfaction; specifically, it measures general satisfaction, how well a partner meets one's needs, how well the relationship compares to others, and one's regrets about the relationship, for example, one item asks, "how often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?" (Hendrick, 1988; Hendrick, Dicke, & Hendrick, 1998). (See Appendix B). The RAS includes seven Likert-like items, based on the 5-item Marital Assessment Questionnaire (Hendrick, 1981). After reverse-scoring items 4 and 7, items are summed for a total score. Scores can range from 7 (low satisfaction) to 35 (high satisfaction). Furthermore, the RAS is brief and easy to administer.

> The RAS is a generic relationship satisfaction measure with potential for much
> wider application than would be possible for a standard marital satisfaction
> measure. The items are specific enough to tap several relationship dimensions
> (e.g. love, problems, expectations) yet general enough to be appropriate for
> married couples, couples who are living together, dating couples, gay couples,
> and, with minimal changes even for friendships (Hendrick, 1988, p. 97).

More specifically, previous studies found that the RAS had high internal consistency (i.e. $\alpha = .86$; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994) and adequate validity (i.e. $\alpha = .84$; Doohan & Manusov, 2004; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994; Hendrick et al., 1998).

The RAS shows promise for several reasons. Regarding psychometric qualities, the RAS has a coherent factor structure, is internally consistent, is solidly and

consistently related to measures of relevant constructs such as love and self-esteem. In fact, convergent validity is illustrated with an extremely high correlation with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), a well-respected measure of dyadic satisfaction. Hendrick (1988) explored the RAS"s relation to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. Correlations between the RAS and the four subscales of the DAS were as follows: Dyadic Consensus .62, Dyadic Satisfaction .83, Dyadic Cohesion .57, Affectional Expression .51, and Total DAS .80; all values were significant at the .05 level. These results indicate that the RAS is a unifactorial instrument with conceptually consistent correlations with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Although the DAS is a commonly used and well-respected instrument, it is also relatively lengthy and is oriented to marital relationships which does not fit well with the intended population; mainly college students who are less likely to be married. On the other hand, the RAS is worded in such a way as to be relevant to a broader sample of relationship statuses.

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI)

The Conflict Resolutions Styles Inventory (Kurdek, 1994), is a 16-item Likert-like scale self-report measure that assesses each partner"s individual style of handling conflict. (See Appendix C). It is based on the conceptual position that relationship maintenance and relationship stability are affected by each partner"s individual style of resolving conflict. Because both partners can complete the CRSI, information about each partner"s conflict resolution styles is available from two sources of information – the self and the partner. However, for the purpose of this research, the inventory was taken on behalf of oneself since both partners were not required to complete the questionnaire.

Scores on the CRSI in its entirety can range from 16 to 80. Items 1, 5, 9 & 13 indicate a conflict engagement style, items 2, 6, 10, &14 indicate a positive problem solving style, items 3, 7, 11, & 15 indicate a withdrawal conflict resolution style, and items 4, 8, 12, & 16 indicate compliance. For each item, scores can range from 1, never, to 5, often. Each style has 4 questions; therefore a total score on each style can range from 4, never use that style, to 20, always use that style. Kurdek (1994) did not provide a cutoff for having a certain style. Previous studies found that the Cronbach''s alphas for the summed composite scores were .88, .80, .83 and .83 (Kurdek, 2001).

Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI)

The Ineffective Arguing Inventory (Kurdek, 1994) is an 8-item Likert-like scale self-report measure that assesses each partner''s view of how the respondent and his or her partner as a couple handle arguments and measures the construct of "ineffective arguing." (See Appendix D). Items 5, 6, and 7 were adapted from the Problem-Solving Communication scale of the Marital Satisfaction Inventory; all remaining items were originally designed by Kurdek (1994). On each item, participants can choose whether they 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. After reverse-scoring items 1, 3, and 8, items are summed for a total score. Scores can range from 8 (low/little arguing) to 40 (high/many arguments). Previous studies found that the Cronbach''s alphas for the summed composite score was .87 (Kurdek, 2001).

Assessing Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire (ARCQ)

The Assessing Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire (Gottman & Silver, 1999) is a 17 item self-report measure that assesses each partner''s view of common causes of conflict in a relationship. (See Appendix E). This scale was used to measure content and

quantity of conflict. Partners are asked to check whether each item is or is not a problem currently in their relationship. If it was a problem, participants were asked to check all the specific subareas that they thought were troublesome. Scores can range from 0 (none of the items are currently a problem in their relationship) to 17 (all of the items are currently a problem in their relationship). It can be deduced then that the more items participants endorse the more problems the person is currently experiencing in their relationship. If more than two subareas of each of the seventeen general areas that cause problems are checked, then this is interpreted as an area of significant conflict in the relationship.

The Assessing Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire was adapted from Gottman and Silver‟s (1999) "Assessing Your Marital Conflicts Questionnaire." This scale was adapted in the following ways: participants are asked to indicate whether each of the seventeen items are or are not currently a problem in their relationship instead of whether each item is a perpetual or solvable problem or not a problem at this time. Asking participants to categorize whether the problem was perpetual or solvable was eliminated because participants will not be educated on the differences between perpetual and solvable problems. In addition, the word spouse was replaced with the word partner and the word marriage was replaced with the word relationship. These words were replaced so that dating and engaged relationships could be assessed in addition to marital relationships.

Relationship Style Questionnaire (RSQ)

The Relationship Style Questionnaire (Gottman, 1999) is a 59 item self-report measure that assess each partner‟s relationship style. The first 29 items assesses whether

either partner uses a conflict avoidance style. (See Appendix F). This scale was used to

measure content and quantity of conflict. This scale was used to classify the degree to

which partners endorse Gottman's styles of conflict resolution; conflict avoidance,

validating, and volatile. Participants were asked to answer yes or no to each item

depending on whether or not they mostly agreed (yes) or disagreed (no). This section can

be taken on behalf of oneself and/or of one's partner as well. However, for the purpose of

this research, the questionnaire was only taken on behalf of oneself since both partners

were not required to complete the questionnaire. The number of items circled yes are

totaled with a score greater than 8 indicating that the partner is probably comfortable with

a conflict-avoider relationship philosophy.

The last 30 questions assess what percent of the time partners used a volatile and

validator style of conflict resolution. Again, partners answered yes or no to each item

depending on whether or not they mostly agreed (yes) or disagreed (no). This section can

also be taken on behalf of the partner. However, for the purpose of this research, the

questionnaire was only taken on behalf of oneself since both partners were not required to

complete the questionnaire. Half of the items indicate a volatile relationship style, with

the other half of the items indicating a validator relationship style; items are distributed

evenly throughout the questionnaire. Each item that the partner answered yes to was

added up for each style. The sum of each style is divided by the total items for that style

(15) to yield a percentage score for each partner's comfort level with each style. For

example, a score of 87% under validator suggests that a person is mostly comfortable

with a validator philosophy in their relationship, but may also show elements of the

volatile type with which the person is also comfortable, for example, if there is a score of 47%.

The Relationship Style Questionnaire was adapted from Gottman''s (1999) Marital Style Questionnaire. This scale was adapted by replacing the word spouse with the word partner and the words marriage and marital were replaced with the word relationship. These words were replaced so that dating and engaged relationships could be assessed in addition to marital relationships.

Your Last Argument Questionnaire (YLAQ)

The Last Argument Questionnaire (Gottman & Silver, 1999) is a 27 item self-report measure that assesses how participants felt during their most recent argument, what triggered those feelings and what the argument was rooted in. (See Appendix G). This scale was used as an exploratory measure to assess the potential impact of factors other than conflict style on satisfaction and/or whether these other factors are linked to conflict styles as well. The first 16 items assessed how each partner felt during their last argument. For each item (which describes a feeling) partners were asked to circle whether they did not at all feel the feeling during the argument (0), felt the feeling a little (1), definitely felt the feeling (2) or felt the feeling a great deal (3). Total scores can range from 0 (did not feeling any of the feelings) to 48 (felt all the feelings a great deal).

The next 10 questions assessed what triggered the above feelings. Participants used the same scale as above for items which describe emotional triggers. Scores can range from 0 (do not feel like any of the reasons listed are what triggered the feelings) to 30 (felt that all of these reasons may have attributed to the feelings).

Lastly respondents were asked to check all of the reasons that apply from a list of potential factors contributing to what they feel their most recent argument was rooted in. For the purpose of this research, the questionnaire was only taken on behalf of oneself since both partners were not required to complete the questionnaire.

This questionnaire was adapted from Gottman and Silver's (1999) "Your Last Argument Exercise." This scale was adapted by replacing the word spouse with the word partner. This word was replaced so that dating and engaged relationships could be assessed in addition to marital relationships.

Procedure

Participants were recruited to complete an anonymous on-line survey that included an informed consent, a measure of demographic variables, a measure of relationship satisfaction (RAS), measures of conflict resolution styles (CRSI, IAI, ARCQ, RSQ, YLAQ), and a debriefing statement (see appendixes A-I). The survey was expected to take participants 45 minutes to one hour to complete. The survey was anonymous as no names were asked for. According to SurveyMonkey.com's website (2009), they employ multiple layers of security to make sure that the account and data remain private and secure. They also employ a third-party firm to conduct daily audits of their security, and the data resides behind the latest in firewall and intrusion prevention technology. Additionally, an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) has been added to the account, so that the data is collected in a totally encrypted environment. To encourage participants to complete the survey, participants could sign up to win one of three different gift cards of a 25 dollar value to chain-store businesses. The gift card sign up was not connected to the survey data. The debriefing statement contained information telling participants to send

their contact information (an email address or phone number) to an email address that

was used solely for the purpose of registering participants to win gift cards for their time

in completing this research.

RESULTS

Table 2 displays descriptive data for this sample. As shown, in Table 2, the mean

age of the total sample was 33.81 years with a range of 18 to 80 years old. The mean

length of the current relationship was 11.29 years, with a range of 1 to 57 years. The

mean number of children was 1.29, with a range of 0 to 7 children.

Table 2. Demographics of Sample

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	161	68.5
Male	74	31.5
Highest Level of Education:		
Below 8th Grade	0	0
8th-12th Grade; No HS Diploma	2	.9
HS Diploma/GED	13	5.5
Some College	92	39.1
Associate"s Degree	27	11.5
Bachelor"s Degree	51	21.7
Master"s Degree	34	14.5
PhD or Doctorate	16	6.8
Occupation:		
Student	42	17.9
Blue Collar	100	42.6
White Collar	73	31.1
Not Specified	12	5.1
Unemployed	4	1.7
Retired	4	1.7
Current Annual Income:		
Less than $10,000	68	28.9
$10,000 to $14,999	22	9.4
$15,000 to $24,999	21	8.9
$25,000 to $34,999	33	14.0
$35,000 to $49,999	31	13.2
$50,000 to $74,999	34	14.5
$75,000 to $99,999	14	6.0
$100,000 to $149,999	9	3.8
$150,000 to $199,999	2	.9
$200,000 or more	1	.4

Table 2. Demographics of Sample Continued

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Religious/Spiritual Preference:		
Agnostic	4	1.7
Atheist	2	.9
Baptist	5	2.1
Catholic	62	26.4
Christian	71	30.2
Lutheran	14	6.0
Mennonite	2	.9
Methodist	15	6.4
Protestant	4	1.7
Other	10	4.3
None	16	6.8
Not Specified	30	12.8
Race/Ethnicity:		
African American	4	1.7
Asian	2	.9
Caucasian	220	93.6
Hispanic	7	3.0
Other	2	.9
Sexual Orientation:		
Bisexual	1	.4
Heterosexual	225	96.2
Homosexual	4	1.7
Decline to State	4	1.7
Status of Relationship:		
Dating	88	37.4
Engaged	21	8.9
Married	126	53.6
Previous Marriages:		
0, never married	195	83.7
1, married once	31	13.3
2, married twice	7	3.0

Hypothesis 1

A multiple regression was utilized to examine the relationship between conflict

(as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory - CRSI, Ineffective Arguing

Inventory - IAI, and Relationship Styles Questionnaire - RSQ) and relationship satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale - RAS). The Relationship Assessment Scale scale score was the criterion variable and the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory, Ineffective Arguing Inventory, and Relationship Styles Questionnaire scale scores were the predictor variables.

There were several significant findings. The predictors explained a significant amount of the variance in relationship satisfaction [R^2 =.57, Adj R^2 =.56, F (8, 219) = 35.10, p =.01]. Fifty six percent of the variance in satisfaction was explained by the conflict measures. A significant positive relation between participants" total satisfaction score and participants" total score on the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory positive problem solving subscale (CRSIpps) was found [p =.02] (See Table 3). Also a significant positive relation between the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) total score and the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory compliance (CRSIc) subscale was found [p =.04]. Significant negative relations were found between participants" relationship satisfaction scores and the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI), as well as the Relationship Styles Questionnaire (RSQ) subscales: conflict avoidance and volatility subscales and a positive relationship was found between relationship satisfaction and the validation scale of the RSQ (See Table 3). This means that those with high levels of positive problem solving, compliance and validation tended to score higher on relationship satisfaction and those with high levels of ineffective arguing, conflict avoidance and volatility tended to score lower on relationship satisfaction.

A correlation matrix was also utilized to examine the relationship between conflict (as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory - CRSI, Ineffective

Table 3. Regression Table for Hypothesis 1

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
CRSIce	-.09	.10	-.05	-.88	.38
CRSIpps	.28	.12	.14	2.34	.02*
CRSIw	.03	.123	.02	.26	.80
CRSIc	.20	.10	.11	2.03	.04*
IAI	-.42	.06	-.49	-6.56	.00**
RSQca	-.15	.06	-.13	-2.59	.01*
RSQva	.49	.10	.25	4.71	.00**
RSQvo	-.29	.10	-.10	-3.00	.00**

* $p > .05$ ** $p > .01$ *** $p > .001$ Key: CRSIce = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Conflict Engagement Subscale Total Score, CRSIpps = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Positive Problem Solving Subscale Total Score, CRSIw = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Withdrawal Subscale Total Score, CRSIc = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Compliance Subscale Total Score, IAI = Ineffective Arguing Inventory Total Score, RSQca = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Conflict Avoidance Total Score, RSQva = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Validator Total Score, RSQvo = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Volatile Total Score

Arguing Inventory - IAI, and Relationship Styles Questionnaire - RSQ) and satisfaction

(measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale - RAS). All conflict measures were

correlated with the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS). (See Table 4). The conflict

engagement (CRSIce), withdrawal (CRSIw) and compliance (CRSIw) subscales of the

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory, the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI), and the

conflict avoidance (RSQca) and volatile subscales (RSQvo) of the Relationship Styles

Questionnaire were significantly negatively correlated with the Relationship Assessment

Scale (RAS). The positive problem solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles

Inventory (CRSIpps) and the validator subscale of the Relationship Styles

Questionnaire (RSQva) were significantly positively correlated.

Table 4. Hypothesis 1 Correlations

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. RAS	--	-.34**	.56**	-.44**	-.22**	-.71**	-.18**	.48**	-.17**
2. CRSIce		--	-.37**	.41**	.04	.42**	-.03	-.14**	.09
3. CRSIpps			--	-.41**	-.31**	-.66**	-.13*	.33**	-.05
4. CRSIw				--	.43**	.61**	.16**	-.34**	.03
5. CRSIc					--	.46**	.26**	-.17*	-.14*
6. IAI						--	.17**	-.46**	.06
7. RSQca							--	.08	.09
8. RSQva								--	.13
9. RSQvo									--

* $p > .05$ ** $p > .01$ Key: RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale Total Score, CRSIce = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Conflict Engagement Subscale Total Score, CRSIpps = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Positive Problem Solving Subscale Total Score, CRSIw = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Withdrawal Subscale Total Score, CRSIc = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Compliance Subscale Total Score, IAI = Ineffective Arguing Inventory Total Score, RSQca = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Conflict Avoidance Total Score, RSQva = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Validator Total Score, RSQvo = Relationship Styles Questionnaire Volatile Total Score

Most of the results of the correlation matrix and multiple regression are

consistent. For example, the positive problem solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution

Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) was significant in both the correlation matrix and the

multiple regression. These same findings are true in all other variables except for the

conflict engagement and withdrawal subscales of the Conflict Resolution Styles

Inventory (CRSIce and CRSIw), indicating that co-variance is likely in these two

variables. Co-variance is also likely in the compliance subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory as it was positively related in the multiple regression and was weakly negative in the correlation matrix.

Hypothesis 2

A correlation was also utilized to examine the relationship between total amount and severity of perpetual problems (as measured by the ARCQ), conflict (as measured by the CRSI) and relationship satisfaction (measured by the RAS). The correlations yielded several significant findings. Satisfaction (RAS) and the positive problem solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) were negatively correlated with both total amount (Total PP) and severity of perpetual problems (PP Severity) (See Table 5). Whereas the conflict engagement (CRSIce), withdrawal (CRSIw), and compliance (CRSIc) subscales of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory were positively correlated with both total amount (Total PP) and severity of perpetual problems (PP severity) (See Table 5).

Hypothesis 3

A MANOVA was performed to examine whether gender contributed to differences in conflict and satisfaction. Gender served as the independent variable while the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI), Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), and conflict engagement (CRSIce) and withdrawal (CRSIw) subscale scores of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory served as the dependent variables. A significant difference was found between males and females on the conflict engagement scale (CRSIce) of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory [$F(1, 229) = 5.46$, $p = .020$]. Females ($M = 8.43$, $SD = 2.83$) scored significantly higher than males ($M = 7.51$, $SD = 2.71$). Significant

differences by gender were not found for the Relationship Assessment Scale, the

withdrawal subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) or the

Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI) (See Table 6).

Table 5. Hypothesis 2 Correlations

Subscale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. RAS	--	-.34**	.56**	-.44**	-.22**	-.54**	-.60**
2. CRSIce		--	-.37**	.41**	.04	.30**	.33**
3. CRSIpps			--	-.41**	-.31**	-.28**	-.30**
4. CRSIw				--	.43**	.40**	.45**
5. CRSIc					--	.28**	.30**
6. Total PP						--	.95**
7. PP Severity							--

** $p > .01$ Key: RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale Total Score, CRSIce = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Conflict Engagement Subscale Total Score, CRSIpps = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Positive Problem Solving Subscale Total Score, CRSIw = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Withdrawal Subscale Total Score, CRSIc = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Compliance Subscale Total Score, Total PP = Total Number of Perpetual Problems (17 Total), PP Severity = Total Severity of perpetual problems (102 possible)

Table 6. MANOVA for Hypothesis 3 (Conflict and Satisfaction by Gender)

Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
RAS	65.38	1	65.38	2.43	.12
CRSIce	42.53	1	42.53	5.46	.02*
CRSIw	18.33	1	18.33	2.74	.10
IAI	61.83	1	61.83	1.60	.21

* $p > .05$ Key: RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale, CRSIce = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Conflict Engagement Subscale Total Score, CRSIw = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Withdrawal Subscale Total Score, IAI = Ineffective Arguing Inventory Total

Hypothesis 4

Six multiple regressions were utilized to examine the relationship among the four conflict style subtypes of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (conflict engaging - CRSIce, positive problem solving - CRSIpps, withdrawal- CRSIw and compliance - CRSIc), conflict level (Ineffective Arguing Inventory - IAI) and satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale - RAS) and age, number of children, and length of relationship. The four conflict styles, conflict level and satisfaction served as the criterion variables, each in separate analyses, while age, number of children, and length of relationship functioned as the predictor variables in all analyses. Results of the multiple regressions yielded several significant findings.

The predictors explained a significant amount of variance in relationship satisfaction [R^2 =.05, Adj R^2 =.04, F (3, 215) = 3.72, p =.007]. Four percent of the variance in relationship satisfaction was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant negative relation between relationship satisfaction and number of children (See Table 7).

A significant relation was also found between the conflict engagement subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIce) and all three predictor variables [R^2 =.07, Adj R^2 =.06, F (3, 215) = 5.36]. Six percent of the variance in the conflict engagement subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIce) was explained by participants" age [p =.000], length of relationship [p =.001], and number of children [p =.015] (See Table 7). There was a significant negative relation between conflict engagement and age and a significant positive relation between conflict engagement and length of relationship and number of children.

The predictors explained a significant amount of variance in the positive problem solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) [R^2 =.21, Adj R^2 =.03, F (3, 215) = 3.32, p =.002]. Three percent of the variance in the positive problem solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant negative relation between the total positive problem solving subscale score on Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) and number of children (See Table 7).

The predictors also explained a significant amount of variance in the withdrawal subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) [R^2 =.03, Adj R^2 =.02, F (3, 215) = 2.35, p =.045]. Two percent of the variance in the withdrawal subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant positive relation between the total withdrawal subscale score on Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) and number of children (See Table 7).

Lastly, the predictors explained a significant amount of variance in the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI) [R^2 =.21, Adj R^2 =.03, F (3, 214) = 3.20, p =.005]. Three percent of the variance in the Ineffective Arguing Inventory was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant positive relation between the Ineffective Arguing Inventory and number of children (See Table 7). No significant differences were found on the compliance subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory.

Table 7. Hypothesis 4 Multiple Regressions

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	p
Relationship Assessment Scale					
Age	.029	.047	.082	.612	.541
Length of Relationship	.072	.050	.173	1.458	.146
Number of Children	-.848	.310	-.240	-2.736	.007**
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory – Conflict Engagement Subscale					
Age	-.092	.025	-.494	-3.735	.000**
Length of Relationship	.085	.026	.379	3.232	.001**
Number of Children	.404	.164	.213	2.458	.015*
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory – Positive Problem Solving Subscale					
Age	.030	.024	.167	1.249	.213
Length of Relationship	-.005	.025	-.023	-.194	.846
Number of Children	-.492	.157	-.275	-3.124	.002**
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory – Withdrawal Subscale					
Age	-.026	.024	-.150	-1.114	.267
Length of Relationship	.031	.025	.149	1.246	.214
Number of Children	.315	.156	.179	2.018	.045*
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory – Compliance Subscale					
Age	-.021	.027	-.107	-.781	.435
Length of Relationship	.010	.029	.040	.330	.741
Number of Children	.216	.182	.107	1.190	.235
Ineffective Arguing Inventory					
Age	-.081	.056	-.192	-1.447	.149
Length of Relationship	-.025	.060	-.050	-.422	.674
Number of Children	1.060	.372	.251	2.852	.005**

$* p > .05$ $** p > .01$

Hypothesis 5

A MANOVA was utilized to examine whether relationship status contributed to differences in conflict and satisfaction. Relationship status (dating, engaged, or married) served as the independent variable and the four subscale scores of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (conflict engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal), the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) were the dependent variables. A significant difference was found between participants who were married and those who were dating on the conflict engagement subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIce) [$F(2, 228) = 3.65$, $p = .027$]. A post hoc Scheffe test revealed that participants who were married ($M = 8.60$, $SD = 2.88$) scored significantly higher than participants who were in a dating relationship ($M = 7.56$, $SD = 2.55$). Participants who were married ($M = 8.91$, $SD = 2.66$) also scored significantly higher than participants who were in a dating relationship ($M = 7.98$, $SD = 2.58$) on the withdrawal subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) [$F(2, 228) = 4.12$, $p = .018$]. (See Table 8).

A MANOVA was also utilized to examine whether level of education contributed to differences in conflict and satisfaction. Education was classified into three groups. Post graduates were classified as those individuals who earned a Master"s degree or Ph. D, college graduates were classified as those individuals who completed some college, earned an Associate"s or Bachelor"s degree, and participants who did not complete any college were classified as K-12. Level of education served as the independent variable

Table 8. MANOVAS for Hypothesis 5

Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Conflict and Satisfaction by Status of Relationship					
RAS	37.037	2	18.518	.686	.505
CRSIce	56.722	2	28.361	3.652	.027*
CRSIw	54.072	2	27.036	4.117	.018*
CRSIpps	25.949	2	12.975	1.922	.149
CRSIc	9.547	2	4.774	.529	.590
IAI	94.758	2	47.379	1.227	.295
Conflict and Satisfaction by Level of Education					
RAS	188.578	2	94.289	3.580	.029*
CRSIce	21.410	2	10.705	1.351	.261
CRSIw	3.181	2	1.591	.234	.791
CRSIpps	43.550	2	21.775	3.264	.040*
CRSIc	11.241	2	5.620	.623	.537
IAI	230.815	2	115.407	3.035	.050*
Conflict and Satisfaction by Income					
RAS	19.814	2	9.907	.366	.694
CRSIce	32.731	2	16.365	2.079	.127
CRSIw	45.617	2	22.808	3.454	.033*
CRSIpps	1.196	2	.598	.087	.917
CRSIc	2.130	2	1.065	.118	.889
IAI	36.344	2	18.172	.467	.627

* $p > .05$ Key: RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale Total Score, CRSIce = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Conflict Engagement Subscale Total Score, CRSIpps = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Positive Problem Solving Subscale Total Score, CRSIw = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Withdrawal Subscale Total Score, CRSIc = Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory Compliance Subscale Total Score, IAI = Ineffective Arguing Inventory Total Score

and the four subscale scores of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (conflict

engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal), the Ineffective

Arguing Inventory (IAI) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) were the

dependent variables. A significant difference was found among different education levels

on the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) [$F(2, 228) = 3.58$, $p = .029$]. A post hoc

Scheffe test indicated that post-graduates scored significantly higher ($M = 30.24$, $SD =$

4.49) than those who either attended and/or graduated from college ($M = 28.22$, $SD =$

5.36). A significant difference was also found by education on the positive problem

solving subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIpps) [$F(2, 228) =$

3.26, $p = .04$]. A post hoc Scheffe test indicated that participants who were post graduates

scored significantly higher ($M = 15.92$, $SD = 1.72$) than those individuals who reported

they attended and/or graduated from college ($M = 14.86$, $SD = 2.77$). Lastly, a significant

difference was also found in the Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI) [$F(2, 228) = 3.04$, p

$= .05$]. Post hoc tests showed that participants who attended and/or graduated from

college ($M = 18.50$, $SD = 6.20$) scored significantly higher than post-graduates on

ineffective arguing ($M = 16.06$, $SD = 5.90$). (See Table 8).

Additionally, a MANOVA was utilized to examine whether income level

(classified as high, medium, or low) contributed to differences in conflict and

satisfaction. A high income level was classified as those individuals who earn $75,000

per year or greater, medium income level was classified as those individuals who earn

$25,000 to $74,999 per year and low income level was classified as those individuals

who earn less than $10,000 to $24,999 per year. Income level served as the independent

variable and the four subscale scores of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (conflict

engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal) the Ineffective

Arguing Inventory (IAI) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) were the

dependent variables. A significant difference was found among different income levels

on the withdrawal subscale of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSIw) [F(2,

228) = 3.45, p = .033]. Post hoc Scheffe tests indicated that participants who reported a

medium income level (M = 8.99, SD = 2.67) scored significantly higher than those

individuals who reported they earned a low income (M = 7.95, SD = 2.62). (See Table 8).

DISCUSSION

Findings regarding the link between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction have been consistent; each spouse‟s level of marital satisfaction is positively related to the frequency with which both spouses use constructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as agreement, compromise, and humor) and negatively related to the frequency with which each spouse uses destructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as conflict engagement, withdrawal, and defensiveness) (Kurdek, 1995). In past research, frequent use of positive problem solving was linked to increases in relationship satisfaction, whereas frequent use of conflict engagement (wife) and withdrawal (husband) was linked to decreases in relationship satisfaction; compliance (to conform to another person‟s demand/request) failed to predict relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994).

Results from observational studies indicate that the communications of distressed couples differ in quality and in intensity from those of nondistressed couples. Among the most consistent findings in this area are that distressed partners criticize and disagree with each other more often than do nondistressed partners, and that they reciprocate negative behaviors to a greater extent than do members of nondistressed couples (Birchler, et al., 1975; Gottman, et al., 1977; Margolin & Wampold, 1981). Additionally, longitudinal data supports the notion that conflictual interactions predict marital dissatisfaction and breakup (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997).

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between conflict and satisfaction. Fifty six percent of the variance in relationship satisfaction was explained by the conflict

variables. The following predictors impacted relationship satisfaction: positive problem solving, compliance, ineffective arguing, as well as conflict avoidance, validation and volatility. Conflict engagement and withdrawal did not impact satisfaction. Those with high levels of positive problem solving, compliance and validation tended to score higher on relationship satisfaction and those with high levels of ineffective arguing, conflict avoidance and volatility tended to score lower on relationship satisfaction.

Correlations demonstrated that in general, there was a link between relational conflict style and relationship satisfaction (for example, a person who is highly argumentative tended to have low satisfaction). Several strong relationships were found. For example, there was a strong positive correlation between positive problem solving and relationship satisfaction. There was a strong negative correlation between relationship satisfaction and ineffective arguing. There was a strong negative correlation between positive problem solving and ineffective arguing. There was also a strong positive correlation between withdrawal and ineffective arguing.

These findings make sense as the validator and positive problem solving subscales are seen as helpful in resolving conflict and should assist in improving satisfaction while the other above mentioned subscales more negatively impact conflict and could diminish relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the correlations that were negatively correlated could be said to be opposites of a healthy, satisfied relationship while those that were positively correlated could be said to be equivalent to a healthy, satisfied relationship (e.g. Billings, 1979; Christensen & Walczynksi, 1997; Gottman, et al., 1977; Greeff & DeBruyne, 2000; Kurdek, 1994; Margolin & Wampold, 1981).

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two examined how the presence of perpetual problems affect conflict and satisfaction; that is do perpetual problems predict satisfaction and conflict? In essence, Gottman (1999) and Gottman & Silver (1999) claim that it doesn''t matter how much a couple fights, what matters is how they fight, the number of perpetual problems should not affect satisfaction, quality of how the problems are discussed is what should affect them. It appears as though the current study''s findings are counter to Gottman''s assertion.

As couples who participated had more and more severe perpetual problems, relationship satisfaction was lower (there was a strong negative correlation between relationship satisfaction and total number of perpetual problems). There was also a strong negative correlation between relationship satisfaction and severity of perpetual problems. Additionally, there was a moderate negative correlation between positive problem solving and severity of perpetual problems. Lastly, weak and moderate correlations existed between conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance and severity of perpetual problems. These findings demonstrate that more perpetual problems, in addition to conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance, are seen as negatively impacting satisfaction, while positive problem solving is seen as more helpful to satisfaction and a lesser likelihood of perpetual problems (e.g. Gottman, 1999; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Schaap et al., 1988).

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three examined the effect of gender on conflict style, amount of arguing, and satisfaction. Based on Christensen and Heavey''s (1990, 1993) demand

withdraw pattern, it was predicted that women would be more likely to report using a conflict engagement style of conflict and that men would be more likely to report using a withdrawal style of conflict as measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory subscales. It was predicted that there would be gender differences in level of conflict as measured by Ineffective Arguing Inventory scores. It was also predicted that there would be gender differences in relationship satisfaction as measured by the Relationship Assessment Scale. A significant difference was found between males and females on conflict engagement. Females scored significantly higher than males, indicating that women appear to engage in conflict engagement more so then men. The other dependent variables were not significant, therefore a "demand-withdraw" pattern was not evident (e.g., Gottman, 1994a, 1994b & 1998; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Gottman & Silver, 1999; Kurdek, 1994).

<div align="center">Hypothesis Four</div>

Hypothesis four asked how demographic variables other than gender (namely age, number of children, and length of relationship) impact conflict style (by utilizing the four subscales of the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory namely conflict engagement, positive problem solving, compliance and withdrawal), conflict level (Ineffective Arguing Inventory) and satisfaction (Relationship Assessment Scale).

Four percent of the variance in relationship satisfaction was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant negative relation between relationship satisfaction and number of children. This indicates that participants who scored higher on relationship satisfaction tended to have fewer children.

Six percent of the variance in conflict engagement was explained by participants" age, length of relationship, and number of children. There was a significant negative relation between conflict engagement and age and a significant positive relationship between conflict engagement and relationship length and number of children. Those who scored higher on conflict engagement tended to be younger and to have been in a relationship longer and have more children.

Three percent of the variance in positive problem was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant negative relation between positive problem solving and number of children. Those who scored higher on positive problem solving tended to have fewer children.

Two percent of the variance in withdrawal was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant positive relation between withdrawal and number of children. Those who scored higher on withdrawal tended to have more children.

Three percent of the variance in ineffective arguing was explained by participants" age, length of relationship and number of children. There was a significant positive relation between ineffective arguing and number of children. Those who scored higher on ineffective arguing tended to have more children. No significant differences were found for compliance.

These findings appear to demonstrate that children significantly impact relationship satisfaction. Participants with fewer children scored higher on relationship satisfaction and positive problem solving while those with more children scored higher on conflict engagement, withdrawal, and ineffective arguing. These findings appear

sensible as people tend to become more stressed after having children which can lead

to lowered relationship satisfaction and a greater tendency to resolve conflict

ineffectively. Additionally, a "demand-withdrawal" pattern appears evident amongst

couples with more children. (Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Carstensen, et al., 1995; Cate, et

al., 2002; Huston, 1994; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; 1993).

<div align="center">Hypothesis Five</div>

Hypothesis five examined how relationship status (dating, married or engaged),

education level (K-12, college, and post-graduates), and income level (high, medium, or

low) impact conflict style, conflict level, and satisfaction. A significant difference was

found between participants who were married and those who were dating on conflict

engagement. Participants who were married scored significantly higher than participants

who were in a dating relationship. This demonstrates that couples who were married tend

to engage in conflict engagement more often than participants who are dating.

Participants who were married also scored significantly higher than participants who

were in a dating relationship on withdrawal. These findings appear to provide evidence

for the demand-withdraw pattern for couples who are married. (Burgess & Wallin, 1953;

Carstensen, et al., 1995; Cate, et al., 2002; Christensen & Heavey, 1990; 1993; Gottman,

1994a; Huston, 1994).

A significant difference was found between college and post-graduates on

relationship satisfaction. Post-graduates scored significantly higher than those who either

attended and/or graduated from college on positive problem solving. A significant

difference was also found between college and post-graduates on ineffective arguing.

Participants who attended and/or graduated from college scored significantly higher than

post-graduates. Therefore it appears as though individuals who are more highly educated participated in conflict more positively than those with a slightly lesser education.

A significant difference was found between low and medium income levels on withdrawal. Participants who reported a medium income level scored significantly higher than those individuals who reported they earned a low income. These findings indicated that individuals who earned a higher income participated in withdrawal more than those who earn a lower income.

Limitations

The significant results identified in this study, while interesting and potentially meaningful, must be interpreted with caution, primarily due to the disproportionate number of participants in certain groups within the sample, specifically the high proportion of Caucasian females and college-aged students. Additionally, the data collected are from self-report surveys. Self-report studies have many advantages, but they also suffer from specific disadvantages due to the way that subjects generally behave. Self-reported answers may be exaggerated and respondents may be too embarrassed to reveal private details. Additionally, self-report studies are inherently biased by the person's feelings at the time they filled out the questionnaire. Furthermore, the data are mainly correlational and thus causation cannot be inferred from the results. Lastly, the following items could have been used to assess relationship satisfaction instead of the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS): the 280-item Marital Satisfaction Inventory and the 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Hendrick, 1988). The above-mentioned relationship satisfaction measures may have been better to utilize since

extensive research in determining the degree of dissatisfaction couples are experiencing has already been studied. Marital quality as opposed to general relationship satisfaction is examined in the above mentioned surveys through several subscales. For instance, problem solving communication, role orientation, family history of distress, dissatisfaction with children and conflict over child rearing are a few constructs measured in the Marital Satisfaction Inventory while dyadic consensus, dyadic satisfaction, dyadic cohesion, and affectional expression are constructs measured in the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Hendrick, 1988).

<div align="center">Future Studies</div>

In the future it would be interesting to see this study completed with couples (i. e. couples complete the surveys together and then the results are compared for each couple as past research, especially Gottman"s [1993; Gottman et al., 1977], has focused on having couples engage in interactions instead of completing surveys). To date, perhaps the most productive method for studying relationship conflict has been to code videotapes of partner conversations for small samples of couples in a laboratory setting (Kurdek, 1994). Dyads would be interesting to study so that factors amongst each couple could be studied and compared across other couples. Couples could complete measures not only on their own personal view of their conflict style and relationship satisfaction in the dyad, but on that of their partner as well. More in depth, longitudinal analyses of the relationships among relationship satisfaction and conflict should be initiated in order to measure how participants" conflict and satisfaction change over time and under different circumstances (i.e. children, education, employment, etc).

It is important to note that much of the literature regarding conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships utilizes married couples; therefore it would be interesting to continue to investigate relationships that evolve in more racially diverse groups, various socioeconomic conditions, different lengths and types of relationships (including those who are dating, engaged, married, cohabitating, separated, recently divorced, etc), or within multicultural settings. It would also be of interest to help understand how conflict and satisfaction evolve and change over time and under various circumstances. These explorations could be initiated as part of a larger much-needed research initiative directed toward understanding the role that conflict plays in the relational dyad.

In addition, it would be particularly useful for research to be conducted in clinical populations so that a broader perspective could be gained regarding the nature of conflict in relationships. Further, utilization of multiple methods including physiological measures, observational measures, and more qualitative measures such as diary methods also would add significantly to the depth of our understanding about how conflict affects relationship satisfaction.

REFERENCES

Billings, A. (1979). Conflict resolution in distressed and nondistressed married couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 42(2)*, 368-376.

Birchler, G. R., Weiss, R. L., & Vincent, J. P. (1975). Multimethod analysis of social reinforcement exchange between maritally distressed and nondistressed spouse and stranger dyads. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 31*, 349-360.

Burgess, E. W., & Wallin, P. W. (1953). *Engagement and marriage*. New York: Lippincott.

Carstensen, L. L., Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1995). Emotional behavior in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging, 10*(1), 140-149.

Cate, R. M., Levin, L. A., & Richmond, L. S. (2002). Premarital relationship stability: A review of recent research. (Electronic version). *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*(2), 261-284.

Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990), Gender and social structure in the demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 73-81.

Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1993). Gender differences in marital conflict: The demand-withdraw interaction pattern. In S. Oskamp & M. Costanzo (Eds.), *Gender issues in contemporary society* (pp. 113-141). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Christensen, A., & Walczynski, P. T. (1997). Conflict and satisfaction in couples. In R. J. Sternberg & M. Hojjat (Eds.), *Satisfaction in close relationships* (pp. 249-274). New York: The Guilford Press.

Cramer, D. (2000). Relationship satisfaction and conflict style in romantic relationships. *The Journal of Psychology, 134*(3), 337-341.

Crohan, S. E. (1992). Marital happiness and spousal consensus on beliefs about marital conflict: A longitudinal investigation. (Electronic version). *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9*, 89-102.

Doohan, E. M., & Manusov, V. (2004). The communication of compliments in romantic relationships: An investigation of relational satisfaction and sex differences and similarities in compliment behavior. *Western Journal of Communication, 68*, 170-194.

Fischer, J., & Corcoran, K. (1994). *Measures for clinical practice: A sourcebook* (2nd ed., Vol. 1). New York: Free Press.

Genshaft, J. L. (1980). Perceptual and defensive style variables in marital discord. *Social Behavior and Personality, 8*, 81-84.

Gottman, J. M. (1998). Psychology and the study of marital processes. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49*, 169-197.

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically based marital therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc

Gottman, J. M. (1993). The roles of conflict engagement, escalation, and avoidance in marital interaction: A longitudinal view of five types of couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61, 6-15.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

Gottman, J. M. (1994a). *What predicts divorce: The relationship between marital process and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gottman, J. M. (1994b). *Why marriages succeed or fail*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Gottman, J. M., & Krokoff, L. J. (1989). Marital interaction and satisfaction: A longitudinal view. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57*(1), 47-52.

Gottman, J. M., & Levenson R. W. (1992). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behavior, physiology, and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*(2), 221-233.

Gottman, J. M., Markman, H., & Notarius, C. (1977). The topography of marital conflict: A sequential analysis of verbal and nonverbal behavior. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 39*, 461-477.

Greeff, A. P., & DeBruyne, T. (2000). Conflict management style and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy, 26,* 321-334.

Hendrick, S. S. (1981). Self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*(6)*,* 1150-1159.

Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50,* 93-98.

Hendrick, S. S., Dicke, A., & Hendrick, C. (1998). The Relationship Assessment Scale. (Electronic version). *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*(1), 137-142.

Huston, T. L. (1994). Courtship antecedents of marital satisfaction and love. In R. Erber & R. Gilmour (Eds.), *Theoretical frameworks for personal relationships* (pp. 43-65). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Kurdek, L. A. (1994). Conflict resolution in gay, lesbian, heterosexual nonparent, and heterosexual parent couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56,* 705-722.

Kurdek, L. A. (1995). Predicting change in marital satisfaction from husbands" and wives" conflict resolution styles. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57,* 153-164.

Kurdek, L. A. (2001). Differences between heterosexual-nonparent couples and gay, lesbian, and heterosexual-parent couples (Electronic version). *Journal of Family Issues, 22*(6), 727-754.

Lulofs, R. S., & Cahn, D. D. (2000). *Conflict: From theory to action*. Massachusetts: Allyn & Bacon.

Margolin, G. (1988). Marital conflict is not marital conflict is not marital conflict. In R. dev. Peters & R. McMahon (Eds.), *Marriage and families: Behavioral treatment and processes* (pp. 193-216). New York: Brunner/Mazel

Margolin, G., & Wampold, B. (1981). Sequential analysis of conflict and accord in distressed and nondistressed marital patterns. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 49*, 554-567.

Meeks, B. S., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1998). Communication, love, and Relationship satisfaction (Electronic version). *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*(6), 755-773.

Peterson, D. R. (1983). Conflict. In H. H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau, & D. R. Peterson (Eds.), *Close relationships* (pp. 360-396). New York: Freeman.

Rusbult, C. E. (1983). A longitudinal test of the investment model: The development (and deterioration) of satisfaction and commitment in heterosexual involvements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45*(1), 101-117.

Schaap, C., Buunk, B., & Kerkstra, A. (1988). Marital conflict resolution. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 203-244). Philadelphia, PA: Multilingual Matters.

Snyder, M., Tanke, E. D., & Berscheid, E. (1977). Social perception and interpersonal behavior: On the self-fulfilling nature of social stereotypes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35*(9), 656-666.

Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S.W. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. (Electronic version). *Family Process, 41*(4), 659-675.

Survey Monkey (2009). www.surveymonkey.com.

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.

United States Census Bureau. (2005-2007). American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates: Marital status, 2005-2007 [Data file]. Retrieved February 25, 2009 from U.S. Census Bureau *http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm* =y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=ACS_2007_3YR_G00_S1201&ds_name= ACS_2007_3YR-G00

APPENDIX A

Demographics Questionnaire

1. Gender: (please mark)

    ☐ Female
    ☐ Male

2. How old are you? _____

3. Please mark the highest level of education you have achieved.

    ☐ Below 8th grade
    ☐ 8th grade to 12th grade; no high school diploma
    ☐ Graduated from high school/GED
    ☐ Some college
    ☐ Associate"s degree
    ☐ Bachelor"s Degree
    ☐ Master"s Degree
    ☐ PhD or Doctorate

4. Please list your current occupation. _____

5. Please select the one that best describes your annual income.

    ☐ Less than $10,000
    ☐ $10,000 to $14,999
    ☐ $15,000 to $24, 999
    ☐ $25,000 to $34,999
    ☐ $35,000 to $49,999
    ☐ $50,000 to $74,999
    ☐ $75,000 to $99,999
    ☐ $100,000 to $149,999
    ☐ $150,000 to $199,999
    ☐ $200,000 or more

6. Please list your religion or spiritual preference(s) _____

7. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity/race?

    ☐ African American
    ☐ Asian
    ☐ Caucasian
    ☐ Hispanic
    ☐ Other

8. What is your sexual orientation?

- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Heterosexual
- ☐ Homosexual
- ☐ Decline to state

9. Please list the length of your current relationship in years (Please enter your response in whole numbers only; i.e. the number 3 for three years). _____

10. In your current relationship are you:

- ☐ Dating
- ☐ Engaged
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Other; please specify _____

11. How many times have you been married before this current relationship?

- ☐ 0, never married before this current relationship.
- ☐ 1, married once before this current relationship.
- ☐ 2, married twice before this current relationship.
- ☐ 3, married three times before this current relationship.
- ☐ 4+, married four or more times before this current relationship.

12. How many children do you have?

_____

APPENDIX B

Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)

RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT SCALE (RAS)

Instructions: Using this scale, rate how satisfied you are in your relationship.

1. How well does your partner meet your needs?

1	2	3	4	5
Poorly		Average		Extremely Well

2. In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely Satisfied

3. How good is your relationship compared to most?

1	2	3	4	5
Poor		Average		Excellent

4. How often do you wish you hadn"t gotten into this relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Never		Sometimes		Very Often

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

1	2	3	4	5
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?

1	2	3	4	5
Not much		Average		Very Much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Few		Average		Very Many

Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50,* 93-98

APPENDIX C

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI)

CONFLICT RESOLUTION INVENTORY (CRSI)

Instructions: Using the scale below, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements with your partner.

1. Launching personal attacks.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

2. Focusing on the problem at hand.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

3. Remaining silent for long periods of time.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

4. Not being willing to stick up for myself.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

5. Exploding and getting out of control.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

6. Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

7. Reaching a limit, "shutting down," and refusing to talk any further.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

8. Being too compliant (e.g., e.g., giving in and not defending your position).

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

9. Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

10. Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

11. Tuning the other person out.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

12. Not defending my position.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

13. Throwing insults and digs.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

14. Negotiating and compromising.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

15. Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

16. Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always

Kurdek, L. A. (1994). Conflict resolution in gay, lesbian, heterosexual nonparent, and heterosexual parent couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56,* 705-722.

APPENDIX D

Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAI)

INEFFECTIVE ARGUING INVENTORY

Instructions: Below are descriptions of the kinds of arguments people in relationships are likely to experience. Mark the number that indicates how much you agree that each statement fits your relationship.

1. By the end of an argument, each of us has been given a fair hearing (R)

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

2. When we begin to fight or argue, I think, "Here we go again."

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

3. Overall, I'd say we're pretty good at solving our problems (R)

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

4. Our arguments are left hanging and unresolved.

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

5. We go for days without settling our differences.

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

6. Our arguments seem to end in frustrating stalemates.

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

7. We need to improve the way we settle our differences

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

8. Overall, our arguments are brief and quickly forgotten (R)

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree Strongly

(R) indicates item is reverse-scored

Kurdek, L. A. (1994). Conflict resolution in gay, lesbian, heterosexual nonparent, and heterosexual parent couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 56,* 705-722.

APPENDIX E

Assessing Your Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire

ASSESSING YOUR RELATIONSHIP CONFLICTS QUESTIONNAIRE

The next seventeen items are a list of common causes of conflict in a relationship. For each check whether it is or is not a problem right now. If it IS a problem, check all of the specific subareas that you think are currently troublesome. If it is NOT a problem, you will skip to the next common cause.

1. We are becoming emotionally distant.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #2)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We have difficulty just simply talking to each other.

_____ We are staying emotionally in touch with each other less.

_____ I feel taken for granted.

_____ I feel my partner doesn"t know me right now.

_____ My partner is (or I am) emotionally disengaged.

_____ We spend less time together.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

2. There is spillover of non-relationship stress (such as job tension) into our relationship.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #3)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We don"t always help each other reduce daily stresses.

_____ We don"t talk about these stresses together.

_____ We don"t talk together about stress in a helpful manner.

_____ My partner doesn"t listen with understanding about my stresses and worries.

_____ My partner takes job or other stresses out on me.

_____ My partner takes job or other stresses out on the children or others.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

3. Our relationship is becoming nonromantic and passionless; the fire is dying.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #4)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

    _____ My partner has stopped being verbally affectionate.

    _____ My partner expresses love or admiration less frequently.

    _____ We rarely touch each other.

    _____ My partner (or I) have stopped feeling very romantic.

    _____ We rarely cuddle.

    _____ We have few tender or passionate moments.

    _____ Other (please specify) _____

4. We are having problems in our sex life.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #5)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

    _____ Sex is less frequent.

    _____ I (or my partner) get less satisfaction from sex.

    _____ We have problems talking about sexual problems.

    _____ Each of us wants different things sexually.

    _____ Desire is less than it once was.

    _____ Our lovemaking feels less loving.

    _____ Other (please specify) _____

5. Our relationship is not dealing well with an important change (such as the birth of a child, a job loss, move, illness, or death of a loved one).

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #6)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We have very different view on how to handle things.

_____ This event has led my partner to be very distant.

_____ This event has made us both irritable.

_____ This event has led to a lot of fighting.

_____ I"m worried about how this will all turn out.

_____ We are now taking very different positions.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

6. Our relationship is not handling well a major issue about children. (This category includes whether to have a child).

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #7)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We have very different goals for our children.

_____ We differ on *what* to discipline children for.

_____ We differ on *how* to discipline our children.

_____ We have issues on how to be close to our kids.

_____ We are not talking about these problems well.

_____ There is much tension and anger about these differences.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

7. Our relationship is not handling well a major issue or event concerning in-laws or another relative(s).

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #8)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ I feel unaccepted by my partner's family.

_____ I sometimes wonder which family my partner is in.

_____ I feel unaccepted by my own family.

_____ There is tension between us about what might happen.

_____ This issue has generated a lot of irritability.

_____ I worry about how this will turn out.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

8. One of us is flirtatious outside the relationship, or may have had a recent affair, and/or there is jealousy.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #9)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ This area is the source of a lot of hurt.

_____ This is an area that creates insecurity.

_____ I can't deal with the lies.

_____ It is hard to reestablish trust.

_____ There is a feeling of betrayal.

_____ It's hard to know how to heal over this.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

9. Unpleasant fights have occurred between us.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #10)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ There are more fights now.

_____ Fights seem to come out of nowhere.

_____ Anger and irritability have crept into our relationship.

_____ We get into muddles where we are hurting each other.

_____ I don"t feel very respected lately.

_____ I feel criticized.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

10. We have differences in our basic goals and values or desired lifestyle.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #11)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ Differences have arisen in life goals.

_____ Differences have arisen about important beliefs.

_____ Differences have arisen on leisure time interests.

_____ We seem to want different things out of life.

_____ We are growing in different directions.

_____ I don"t much like who I am with my partner.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

11. Very disturbing events (for example, violence, drugs, an affair) have occurred within our relationship.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #12)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ There has been physical violence between us.

_____ There is a problem with alcohol or drugs.

_____ This is turning into a relationship I hadn"t bargained for.

_____ Our relationship is changing.

_____ I find some of what my partner wants upsetting or repulsive.

_____ I am feeling somewhat disappointed by this relationship.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

12. We are not working well as a team.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #13)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We used to share more of the family"s workload.

_____ We seem to be pulling in opposite directions.

_____ My partner does not fairly share in housework or child care.

_____ My partner is not carrying his or her weight financially.

_____ I feel alone managing this family.

_____ My partner is not being very considerate.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

13. We are having trouble sharing power and influence.

_____ This *IS* a problem   _____ This is *NOT* a problem (SKIP to #14)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ I don‟t feel influential in decisions we make.

_____ My partner has become more domineering.

_____ I have become more demanding.

_____ My partner has become passive.

_____ My partner is "spacey," not a strong force in our relationship.

_____ I am starting to care a lot more about who is running things.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

14. We are having trouble handling financial issues well.

_____ This *IS* a problem   _____ This is *NOT* a problem (SKIP to #15)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ One of us doesn‟t bring in enough money.

_____ We have differences about how to spend money.

_____ We are stressed about finances.

_____ My partner is financially more interested in self than in us.

_____ We are not united in managing our finances.

_____ There is not enough financial planning.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

15. We are not having much fun together these days.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #16)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We don"t seem to have much time for fun.

_____ We try but don"t seem to enjoy our times together very much.

_____ We are too stressed for fun.

_____ Work takes up all our time these days.

_____ Our interests are so different, there are no fun things we like to do together.

_____ We plan fun things to do, but they never happen.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

16. We are not feeling close about spiritual issues these days.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem (SKIP to #17)

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We do not share the same beliefs.

_____ We do not agree about religious ideas and values.

_____ We differ about the specific church, mosque, or synagogue.

_____ We do not communicate well about spiritual issues.

_____ We have issues about spiritual growth and change.

_____ We have spiritual issues involving family or children.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

17. We are having conflict(s) about being a part of and building community together.

_____ This **IS** a problem   _____ This is **NOT** a problem

If Yes, check any of the specific items below that are problems within this general area:

_____ We feel differently about being involved with friends and other people or groups.

_____ We don't care to the same degree about the institutions that build community.

_____ We have different opinions about putting time into the institutions of community (political party, school, hospital, church, mosque, synagogue, agencies, and the like).

_____ We disagree about doing projects or working for charity.

_____ We disagree about doing other good deeds for others.

_____ We have different views about whether to take a leadership role in the service of our community.

_____ Other (please specify) _____

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

APPENDIX F

Relationship Style Questionnaire

RELATIONSHIP STYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Answer "yes" or "no" to each of the following statements, depending on whether or not you mostly agree ("yes") or disagree ("no").

1. I often hide my feelings to avoid hurting my partner.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

2. When we disagree, I don"t believe there is much point in analyzing our feelings and motivations.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

3. When we disagree, we often solve the problem by going back to our basic beliefs about the different roles of men and women in marriage

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

4. We have a lot of separate friends.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

5. It is important to attend a church or synagogue regularly.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

6. Many relationship conflicts are solved just through the passing of time.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

7. We each do a lot of things on our own.

<p align="center">Yes   No</p>

8. During a relationship conflict, there is not much to be gained from figuring out what is happening on a psychological level.

Yes   No

9. Our religious values give us a clear sense of life's purposes.

Yes   No

10. When I'm moody, I prefer to be left alone until I get over it.

Yes   No

11. I don't feel very comfortable with strong displays of negative emotion in my relationship.

Yes   No

12. We turn to our basic religious or cultural values for guidance when resolving conflicts.

Yes   No

13. I just accept most of the things in my relationship that I can't change.

Yes   No

14. We often agree not to talk about things we disagree about.

Yes   No

15. In our relationship there is a fairly clear line between the man's and woman's roles.

Yes   No

16. We just don't seem to disagree very much.

Yes   No

17. When we have some difference of opinion, we often just drop the topic.

                    Yes   No

18. We hardly ever have much to argue about.

                    Yes   No

19. A lot of talking about disagreements often makes matters worse.

                    Yes   No

20. There are some personal areas in my life that I prefer not to discuss with my partner.

                    Yes   No

21. There is not much point in trying to persuade my partner of my viewpoint.

                    Yes   No

22. There"s not much to be gained by getting openly angry with my partner.

                    Yes   No

23. Thinking positively solves a lot of relationship issues.

                    Yes   No

24. In a relationship it is usually best to stick to the traditional values about men and women.

                    Yes   No

25. I prefer to work out many of my negative feelings on my own.

                    Yes   No

26. Going over a lot of negative feelings in a relationship discussion usually makes things worse.

Yes   No

27. If you just relax about problems, they have a way of working themselves out.

Yes   No

28. When we talk about our problems, we find they just aren't that important in the overall picture of our relationship.

Yes   No

29. Men and women ought to have separate roles in a relationship.

Yes   No

30. I think it's a good idea for my partner and me to have a lot of separate friends.

Yes   No

31. I believe in honestly confronting disagreements, whatever the issue.

Yes   No

32. We often do things separately.

Yes   No

33. The feeling of togetherness is central to our relationship.

Yes   No

34. Partners should be direct and honest no matter what the results.

Yes   No

35. I feel quite comfortable with a strong expression of negative feelings.

        Yes   No

36. Sometimes I enjoy a good argument with my partner.

        Yes   No

37. The most important aspect of a relationship is companionship.

        Yes   No

38. Jealousy is sometimes an issue in our relationship.

        Yes   No

39. It is important to be a separate individual in a relationship.

        Yes   No

40. I think we should argue but only about important issues.

        Yes   No

41. We often eat separately.

        Yes   No

42. Our relationship is based on being one another''s best friend.

        Yes   No

43. I enjoy trying to persuade my partner when we have a disagreement.

        Yes   No

44. The religious and other beliefs we share are basic to our relationship.

Yes   No

45. I believe in keeping our relationship very romantic.

Yes   No

46. We often look back at our photo albums together.

Yes   No

47. We cultivate a sense of "we-ness" in our relationship.

Yes   No

48. We share all things personal and emotional in our relationship.

Yes   No

49. All the spaces in our home are shared spaces.

Yes   No

50. I would never take a separate vacation from my partner.

Yes   No

51. At times I enjoy expressing anger.

Yes   No

52. I believe it is important to fight even about small matters.

Yes   No

53. I enjoy working out our values through thorough arguments.

Yes   No

54. There is nothing personal that I do not share with my partner.

Yes   No

55. I am comfortable only with a moderate amount of emotional expression.

Yes   No

56. It is essential to have a strong sense of togetherness in a relationship.

Yes   No

57. Keeping a certain amount of distance in a relationship helps the romance.

Yes   No

58. A strong sense of traditional values is good for a relationship.

Yes   No

59. There are few issues in a relationship worth arguing about.

Yes   No

Gottman, J. M. (1999). *The marriage clinic: A scientifically based marital therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc

APPENDIX G

Your Last Argument Questionnaire

YOUR LAST ARGUMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Think back to the last argument you and your partner had. Mark the number that indicates how much you agree that each statement fits your last argument.

During our last argument I felt:

 1. Defensive.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

2. Hurt .

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

3. Angry.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

4. Sad.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

5. Misunderstood.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

6. Criticized.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

7. Worried.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

8. Righteously Indignant.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

9. Unappreciated.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

10. Unattractive.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

11. Disgusted.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

12. Disapproving.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

13. Like leaving.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

14. Like my opinions didn"t matter.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

15. I had no idea what I was feeling.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

16. Lonely.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

During your last argument, what triggered these feelings?

1. I felt excluded.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

2. I was not important to my partner.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

3. I felt cold toward my partner.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

4. I definitely felt rejected.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

5. I was criticized.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

6. I felt no affection toward my partner.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

7. I felt that my partner was not attracted to me.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

8. My sense of dignity was being compromised.

0	1	2	3
Never	A Little	Definitely	A Great Deal

This recent argument was rooted in: (check all that apply)

_____ The way I was treated in my family growing up

_____ A previous relationship

_____ Past injuries, hard times, or traumas I've suffered

_____ My basic fears and insecurities

_____ Things and events I have not yet resolved or put aside

_____ Unrealized hopes I have

_____ Ways other people treated me in the past

_____ Things I have always thought about myself

_____ Old "nightmares" or "catastrophes" I have worried about

_____ Other (please specify) _____

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). *The seven principles for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert*. New York: Three Rivers Press.

APPENDIX H

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

Study Name: Conflict and Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

Researchers: Meghan Moland and Carrie Nassif, PhD

The Psychology Department at Fort Hays State University supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. Your willingness to help us is greatly appreciated.

This study is designed to examine the relationship between conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships that are of one or more years in duration. As a research participant, you are asked to complete demographic information, *The Relationship Assessment Scale*, *The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory*, *The Ineffective Arguing Inventory*, the *Assessing Relationship Conflicts Questionnaire*, the *Relationship Style Questionnaire*, and the *Last Argument Questionnaire*. These tests will take a total of 45 minutes to one hour to complete.

If you are student at Fort Hays State University, you may receive course or extra credit for your participation provided your instructor awards credit for research participation and you meet the instructor's requirements to receive that credit. In addition, there should be ways to earn extra credit other than by participation in research if extra credit is a benefit you could receive from this study. After completing this survey you will also have the opportunity to sign up for a drawing for a chance to win one of three gift certificates to local chain franchises.

This study has been reviewed to determine that it poses little or no risk of harm to you. However, in the unlikely event that you do feel any force to participate, threat, or discomfort at any time during the study, you may choose to end your participation without being penalized by clicking the "Exit this survey" located on the top right of the web page. You will still receive course or extra credit promised to you even if you do choose to discontinue but you may need to print your final page prior to leaving the survey to serve as proof of your participation. There will be no consequence to you if you elect to end your involvement in this study.

Any information obtained will be kept strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymous. To do this, you will be assigned a subject number in order to assist the researchers with data collection. Be assured that your subject number will not be linked in any way with any reportable results. According to SurveyMonkey.com's website (2009), they employ multiple layers of security to make sure that the account and data remain private and secure. They also employ a third-party firm to conduct daily audits of their security, and the data resides behind the latest in firewall and intrusion prevention technology. Additionally, an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) has been added to this account, so that the data is collected in a totally encrypted environment.

You will gain no benefits by participating in this study other than educational or course credit if it is offered by your instructor or if chosen at random, one of three gift certificates. The researchers are required to tell you as much as you care to know about the study after your part in the study is complete. Upon completion a written summary of the results of this study will be posted on the Fort Hays State University Psychology department"s webpage, found at *http://www.fhsu.edu/psych/*. If you have questions about your rights as a participant you can contact Carrie Nassif, PhD (the chair of the ethics committee) at 785-628-5856.

All participants who partake in this study must indicate that they have read this informed consent form. By checking the "yes" box below, I confirm that: (a) I am at least 18 years of age or older, (b) have read and understood my rights and the study description on this page, and (c) voluntarily agree to participate.

☐ Yes
☐ No

APPENDIX I

Debriefing Statement

Debriefing Statement

      The purpose of this research was to examine the links between conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships that are one or more years in duration. Conflict management is one of the most important determinants of the well-being of a relationship (Crohan, 1992). Several conflict resolution styles have been identified that have bearing on satisfaction in relationships. Kurdek (1994) proposed four conflict resolution styles: conflict engagement, positive problem solving, withdrawal, and compliance. Past research regarding the link between conflict resolution styles and relationship satisfaction have been consistent; each partner"s level of marital satisfaction is positively related to the frequency with which both partners use constructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as agreement, compromise, and humor) and negatively related to the frequency with which each partner uses destructive strategies to resolve conflict (such as conflict engagement, withdrawal, and defensiveness) (Kurdek, 1995). Frequent use of positive problem solving was linked to increases in relationship satisfaction, whereas frequent use of conflict engagement and withdrawal was linked to decreases in relationship satisfaction; compliance (to conform to another person"s demand/request) failed to predict relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994).

      If you feel this research study has caused you any distress please visit the Kelly Center, the campus counseling center. The Kelly Center"s phone number is 785-628-4401 and the website is *www.fhsu.edu/kellycenter*. It is now temporarily located on the sixth floor of Weist Hall and is a free resource to college students. High Plains Mental Health Center is an additional resource for both the college population and the community; the phone number is 785-628-2871.

      For more information about participant rights, you can contact Carrie Nassif, PhD at 785-628-5856. Upon completion, the results of this study will also be posted on the Fort Hays State University Psychology department"s webpage, found at http://www.fhsu.edu/psych/.

      Please print this page for proof of participation. To be eligible for a chance to win one of three $25 gift certificates please email your first name, email address, and/or phone number to *conflictandsatisfaction@yahoo.com*. If you are randomly chosen as the winner of one of the gift certificates you will be contacted by September or October, 2009.

Thank you for participating in this research study.

VITA

Meghan M. Moland

Address: 406 E 32nd St
                Kearney, NE 68847

Phone: (785) 650-9653 (cell)

Education: Fort Hays State University, B.S., Psychology, 2007
                    Graduate Study: Fort Hays State University
                    January 2007 – May 2011

Professional Memberships:
                American Psychological Association (Graduate Student Affiliate)
                Psi Chi

Professional Experience:
                Clinical Internship: Kelly Center, Fort Hays State University, Hays, KS
                    August 2008 – May 2009
                Graduate Teaching Assistant: Fort Hays State University
                    August 2007 – July 2008

Areas of Interest:
                Clinical Research, Clinical Assessments, Conflict, Relationship Satisfaction

THESIS typed by Meghan Moland using MS Word 2007 on a Dell Inspiron 530 computer and printed on a Dell A920 Inkjet printer.