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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DURING RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION:
DISENGAGEMENT RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

MERRY C. BUCHANAN

Norman, Oklahoma

2001

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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DURING RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION:
DISENGAGEMENT RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY

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Acknowledgments

To Rebecca Fairchild

You are my twin
and my best friend

BSF&E

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Abstract

Research in relationship disengagement has focused almost exclusively on strategies used by the initiator of the breakup to the neglect of studying communication strategies employed by partners undesirous of the breakup. Further, extant relational termination research centers on friendships and dating partners in romantic relationships. This study investigates communication strategies used by divorced individuals who did not wish their marriages to end (Non-Initiators). Participants were 270 divorced persons drawn from divorce recovery groups, divorce support groups, and network sampling. Buss's (1988) taxonomy of retention tactics is used to explore planned communication strategies of Non-Initiators during relational dissolution. These tactics are manifestations of overall strategies used by Non-Initiators to retain their spouse. Findings reveal four strategic communication Disengagement Resistance Strategies (DRS) used by Non-Initiators during the relationship disengagement process: Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm. In addition, relationship demographic variables including the participant's age at the time of marriage, participant's age at the time of divorce, and the presence of children in the former marriage predict use of the Negativity, Alignment, and Commitment strategies by Non-Initiators. Implications for the application of DRS to the study of relationship dissolution are discussed, and research directions identified.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A great deal of research about communication in interpersonal relationships focuses on how relationships come together, and conversely, how relationships come apart. The initiation, development, and demise of relationships generally follow predictable patterns—giving us some idea of the processes involved in relationship formation, evolution, and termination. Communication models of relationship formation and dissolution explicate that relationships are experienced in stages and occur as sequential processes (Baxter, 1985; Duck, 1982, 1984; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000; Lee, 1984).

Most salient in relational research is the *communication* that occurs between partners. As Wood (1982) notes: “Communication is represented as a formative process which constitutes, defines and disassembles relationships. Arising out of communication is relational culture, a privately transacted system of discourse and definition that coordinates attitudes, actions, and identities of partners in a relationship” (p. 75). From this perspective, communication between couples is an interactive process. Relational communication behaviors of one partner affect not only the relationship, but the other partner as well (Marston & Hecht, 1994). Notarius and Pellegrini (1984) note that “the prevailing methods of research into personal relationships have focused on the influence of ‘static’ or global characteristic features of partners, rather than on their interactional behaviour” (in Duck, 1984, p. 164). The present study focuses on the communicative processes occurring between partners during the disengagement process.

Relationship Development

Communication research on relational development explores various aspects of romantic relationships: initiation, escalation, maintenance, rejuvenation, repair, reconciliation, and termination. Whereas studies on relationship initiation, escalation, and maintenance address the development of a relationship, studies on rejuvenation, repair, reconciliation, and termination address the demise of a relationship. Relationship initiation and development studies focus on how relationships form and grow (Baxter & Bullis, 1986; Baxter & Wilmot, 1984; Berger, 1988). Relationship escalation or intensification studies look at how relationships deepen (Tolhuizen, 1989). Relationship maintenance research centers on strategies used by individuals to nourish an existing relationship (Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993, 1994; Dindia, 1994; Duck, 1994a, 1994b). According to Baxter (1994), “maintenance, typically conceived as preventive efforts to preserve or sustain a relationship’s current state, presupposes that a condition of stability is both possible and desirable for personal relationships” (p. 233).

Relationship Decline

Termination is not always the result of relationship distress (Rusbult, 1987). Instead of signaling the terminality of the relationship, after conflict, relational partners may decide to rejuvenate their union, continue an ongoing relationship by employing relational repair strategies, restart their relationship as a couple through reconciliation, or redefine a romantic relationship so that lovers become friends (Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989). Relationship rejuvenation (Wilmot, 1994) and relational repair (Baxter & Dindia, 1990; Dindia & Baxter, 1987) deal with choices exercised by individuals who perceive that their relationship, although intact, is in jeopardy. Couples use repair

strategies to mend an intact, damaged relationship (Courtright, Millar, Rogers, & Bagarozzi, 1990; Duck, 1984; Emmers & Canary, 1996; Notarius & Pellegrini, 1984). Baxter (1994) notes that repair is an attempt at relational problem solving “to restore or return a relationship to a former state” (p. 233).

Relational reconciliation has also been studied, although to a lesser degree. Reconciliation, the romantic reattachment or reconnection of two people, focuses on the recoupling of a formerly intact relationship (Kramer & O’Hair, 1986; Patterson, 1988; Vaughn, 1990). As a bilateral alternative to ending the relationship, reconciliation occurs when the couple decides to get back together after a separation or previous termination (O’Hair & Kramer, 1987; Patterson & O’Hair, 1992; Vaughn, 1990). However, once couples physically separate, they are more likely to divorce than reconcile (Gottman & Carrere, 1994). According to Gottman (1994b), approximately 75 percent of the married couples who first choose to “separate for a while” eventually divorce.

Redefining the relationship transpires when partners opt to remain friends after romantic involvement (Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989). Patterson (1988) suggests several factors that may influence reconciliation strategies: length of the relationship, degree of intimacy between partners, and the cause of terminating the relationship. Likewise, these same factors may influence strategies partners employ in response to disengagers. Additionally, partners’ perceived significance of the relationship is an important factor to be considered (Emmers & Hart, 1996). Investigating divorced individuals, such as in the present study, eliminates the need for inquiring as to the perceived significance of the relationship. Married couples generally have a greater commitment level to their relationship than dating or non-married couples. A marriage is

a proclamation of commitment that reflects bonding. Canary, Cody, and Manusov (2000) note that whereas bonding clearly conveys that the partners cherish their relationship (one that is often legally sanctioned), few bonding rituals have been endorsed by society as the norm for non-romantic relationships (p. 218). Although rejuvenation, repair, reconciliation, and redefinition are possibilities for couples in distress, the decision to divorce is a final act terminating an intimate relationship.

The Dark Side of Intimate Relationships

While things often go awry in romantic relationships and disengaging partners are sometimes deliberately hurtful (Vangelisti, 1994), we know less about distressing relationships than those that function smoothly (Brown, 1995; Levitt, Silver, & Franco, 1996; Miller & Parks, 1982). As Miller (1997) observes, “studies of intimacy routinely emphasize its benefits rather than its drawbacks” (p. 12). Relational partners have the ability to hurt each other more powerfully than do others for all the reasons that occur during relationship development: self-disclosure--which provides access to “weaponry” (Miller, 1997, p. 27); increased expectations; decline of novelty; and interdependence. Hatfield (1984) contends that partners in intimate relationships are more vulnerable because they are often more malicious to each other than they are in social relationships. Duck (1994c) notes that “in the bulk of personal relationships research, the underlying assumption is not only that relationships should be nice but also that people are nice” (p. 5). However, more scholars are attending to injurious aspects or the “dark side” of relationships (cf. Cupach & Spitzberg, 1994; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1998).

The dissolution of an important relationship is one of life’s most traumatic events (Bowlby, 1980; Harvey, Flanary, & Morgan, 1986). A prominent feature of relationship

demise occurs when “at least one partner reaches the ‘point of no return’” (Wilmot, 1995, p. 117). In a unilateral breakup in which one partner wishes to end the relationship and the other does not, the person left behind, or the Non-Initiator, has definite reactions and communicative responses to the disengager. A partner’s responses to the disengager’s communication and actions vary.

So how does communication influence relationship dissolution? What happens when one partner in a relationship wants out and the other does not? Extant relational research on disengagement tends to focus on phases of relationship decline, behaviors of the initiator of the breakup, or retrospective accounts of the relationship demise (Owen, 1993). Therefore, addressing the current dearth of research on Non-Initiators, the present study focuses on Non-Initiators’ strategic communicative responses to disengagement moves by their partners.

The goal of this study is to investigate mate retention tactics as a manifestation of overall strategies by Non-Initiators to retain their mate. Buss’s (1988) taxonomy of retention tactics is useful to begin to explore general acts of Non-Initiators, but planned communication strategies of Non-Initiators in actual dissolving relationships warrants further attention. Further, it is important to understand relationship demographic variables (Kurdek, 1993) that affect the use of particular strategies. This study also examines relationship demographic variables as predictors of communication strategy. Relationship demographic variables include the participant’s age at the time of marriage, spouse’s age at marriage, participant’s age at the time of divorce, spouse’s age at divorce, number of times married, length of courtship, length of former marriage, the presence of children in the former marriage, whether each spouse worked outside the home, and current marital

status. Prior to this study, the influence of these relationship demographic variables have not been studied as possible predictor variables of strategies employed to resist marital dissolution. Before discussing a specific method of investigation for this research, it is important review research related to this topic.

Duck (1999a) states that presently, a major goal in the field of personal relationships research is to explicate dissolution, and specifically, Baxter (1982) calls for research that explores how “broken-up-withs” react to initiator’s attempts to disengage from the relationship. The following literature review surveys interdisciplinary research on relationship termination, disengagement strategies, and break up accounts, and concomitantly explicates a rationale and research questions for the study of Non-Initiators’ communicative strategies in response to their disengaging partners.

Operationalizing the Term “Non-Initiator”

Extant literature on relational disengagement does not uniformly utilize one specific term for the partner who does not want the relationship to end. Because most research on disengagement strategies focuses on the initiator, or the person who is desirous of and initiates the breakup, there has been little need to delineate a precise term explicitly denoting the concept of the person unwilling to uncouple. Several terms have been used to refer to the non-initiating partner:

- the “other” (Baxter & Philpott, 1982; Stephen, 1987)
- the “left” (Sprecher, 1994)
- the “partner” (Duck, 1984)
- the “partner being left behind” (Vaughn, 1990)
- “broken-up-withs” (Baxter, 1982; Metts, Cupach & Bejlovec, 1989).

Although additional terms might be serviceable (e.g., resister, mate, devotee), they are consequently inexact, equivocal, or fail to capture the essence of the one person of the couple who wants to remain in the romantic relationship. Because an agreed-upon conceptual definition of the person who does not want the relationship to end currently does not exist, I propose the term “Non-Initiator.” Therefore, the term Non-Initiator will be used throughout this study to refer to the person who did not desire termination of the relationship. In cases in which both partners wished to end the relationship, Non-Initiator refers to the person least desirous of the breakup.

Disengagement Resistance Strategies as Strategic Communication

Individuals intentionally select and utilize strategies to achieve their social goals. How people attempt to achieve their desired outcomes through social interaction is termed strategic communication. Strategic communication is comprised of strategies and tactics. According to Wiemann and Daly (1994), a *strategy* is “a plan of action to achieve a goal or goals” (p. viii). Conversely, *tactics* are “specific moves made to implement a strategy” (Wiemann & Daly, 1994, p. viii). Both tactics and strategies comprise strategic communication in that these behaviors are “formulated in a particular way because it is projected that they will have social utility” (Sanders, 1987, p. 3).

Strategies are defined as “broad, overarching objectives” while tactics refer to “lower level behavioral routines used to actualize strategies” (Berger, 1985; Newton & Burgoon, 1990). Emmers and Canary (1996) clarify the distinction between strategies and tactics: “Communication strategies refer to interaction approaches that people decide to use, whereas tactics refer to the specific behaviors that institute the general strategies” (p. 166).

Non-Initiators' strategies are often emotionally-based. Arousal to being rejected by a relational partner could likely result in goal-directed, strategic performances by Non-Initiators. Although most strategic communication requires cognitive planning and is considered rational, courses of action employed by Non-Initiators might be more emotional, and therefore, an *arational* type of strategic communication (Wiemann & Daly, 1994, p. ix). Non-Initiators select and implement particular strategies to attain the relational goal of keeping the current relationship intact. This study examines the strategies used by Non-Initiators in order to sustain a romantic relationship.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Communication research on relationship termination has typically followed one of three avenues: the termination process, strategies used to disengage, or accounts of break ups (Owen, 1993). However, disengagement from the Non-Initiator's perspective has been studied in a meager fashion. By far the most comprehensive research program on relationship disengagement is that of Baxter (1979; 1982; 1983; 1984; 1985). Baxter (1985) underscores the significance of utilizing a communication perspective when investigating relational dissolution: "it is through communicative action that persons initiate, define, maintain and terminate their social bonds" (p. 245). This section reviews existing research literature that focuses on three primary areas of relational disengagement: termination process models, strategies initiators use to disengage, and breakup accounts. In addition, studies centering on the Non-Initiator perspective are addressed.

Communication Models of the Relational Disengagement Process

The first central area of communication research on relationship termination is models of the disengagement process (Owen, 1993). Research in relationship disengagement often focuses on the process of disengaging from a relationship or the stages of coming apart. Interestingly, when a couple goes through the coming together stages, they experience each stage together--they are in sync (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). A couple's movements from stage to stage and their concomitant communication exchanges are conjointly and cooperatively enacted. For example, one partner cannot be in the initiating stage while the other partner is in the integrating stage. They must "do"

coming together both willingly and simultaneously. Relational escalation involves cycles of growing together (Canary, Cody, & Manusov, 2000). However, this is not the case for relationships that are coming apart. Three predominant models of relationship disengagement (Baxter, 1985; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000; Lee, 1984) suggest that there are distinct stages of ending a relationship, although partners do not necessarily experience the stages of reducing intimacy in unison (Vaughn, 1990).

Interaction Stages in Relationships Model

Knapp and Vangelisti's (2000) staircase Model of Interaction Stages in Relationships delineates the stages of coming together and the stages of coming apart. The processes involved in coming together include five stages: initiating, experimenting, intensifying, integrating, and bonding (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). Conversely, when relationships unravel, partners experience five stages of coming apart: differentiating, circumscribing, stagnating, avoiding, and terminating (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000). In the *differentiating* stage, one or both partners begins to focus on how little they have in common and start to assert their individuality. For example, what was once referred to as "ours" is now "mine" or "yours." The *circumscribing* stage involves constricted communication between partners. Decreases in communication breadth and depth are characteristics of this stage. When couples experience the *stagnating* stage, they often conduct internal instead of external dialogue with the partner. Partners often surmise that because they know that the conversation will probably result in negativity, they feel it is useless to attempt engaging in discourse with the other. During the *avoiding* stage, face-to-face discussions are evaded altogether. Even if partners still share physical space, they refrain from communicating as much as possible. Finally, the *terminating* stage is

comprised of three components: direct or indirect messages concerning the imminent cessation of the relationship, a summary statement, and messages that imply what the future relationship (if there is to be one) will be like. While dyads may move quickly or slowly from stage to stage, they may also skip stages entirely, move around within a particular stage, or they may jump from one stage to another (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000).

Topography of Relational Disengagement and Dissolution

Duck (1984) contends that although relationships decelerate in various ways, “most dissolutions are psychologically and socially ordered and structured” (p. 183). Originally consisting of four phases of relationship dissolution (Duck, 1982), Duck’s (1984) revised model classifies five stages of relationship disengagement: breakdown, intrapsychic phase, dyadic phase, social phase, and grave dressing phase. Duck’s (1984) model emphasizes the processes of decline including the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics occurring during the process of relational deterioration. During *breakdown*, the relationship is sustained, but is less rewarding due to agitation or conflict. At least one partner begins to experience dissatisfaction with the relationship or disaffection with the partner. In the *intrapsychic phase*, one or both partners ruminate over their partner and the troubled relationship. During this period, individuals undergo psychological as opposed to physical detachment. The internal struggle is characteristic of this intrapersonal phase. The *dyadic phase* occurs when one or both individuals voice their dissatisfaction and confront each other. This stage often results in a “state of the relationship” talk, in which one partner expresses his or her dissatisfaction and communicates a desire to exit the relationship (Baxter, 1987). The *social phase* involves telling others about the breakup and garnering social support. Friends and family assist in

validating the person's version of, and reasons for, the breakup. Finally, the *grave-dressing phase* transpires when the partners devise historical accounts for the terminated relationship. The ex-partners' social networks provide validation for each individual's constructed perspective concerning the demise of the relationship and negative attributes of the ex-partner. Duck's (1999a) relational dissolution perspective posits that "there are several different phases, each with a characteristic style and concern" (p. 88).

Sequences in Separation Model

Similar to the two previous models, Lee (1984) also maintains that relationships in the termination process proceed in five stages: discovery of dissatisfaction, exposure, negotiation, resolution, and transformation. Lee's (1984) multi-parameter framework is based on the retrospective phenomenological breakup accounts of 24 pre-marital romantic terminations. First, participants were instructed to "connect factors of their break-up in chronological order and to divide the termination period into meaningful phases and turning points" (Lee, 1984, p. 50). Second, analytic induction was used to compare breakup events identified in 16 respondents' journal entries, thus yielding five stages of the dissolution process.

According to Lee (1984), each stage of the model classifies a critical dissolution event and is characterized by a unique set of processes. In *discovery of dissatisfaction*, tensions or conflicts within the dyad are recognized by one partner. This dissatisfaction threatens the continuance of the couple's relationship. During the *exposure* stage, dissatisfactions are voiced. One partner brings up issues of discontent and expresses them to the partner. Issues of contention are seriously discussed, worked on, and talked through using *negotiation*. When partners reach the *resolution* stage, a decision is reached

concerning the relationship and the action to be taken by one or both partners. In the final stage of *transformation*, changes are executed in the relationship. For example, cohabiting partners might separate physically and dating couples might decrease their communicative encounters or choose to cease the relationship entirely. The issues of dissatisfaction are addressed in the first three stages (discovery, exposure, negotiation) and the terms of resolution are approached in the final two stages (resolution, transformation).

Stages of these three popular communication models of relational disengagement are compared in Table 1 (based on Neuliep, 1996, p. 322).

- Topography of Relational Disengagement and Dissolution (Duck, 1984)
- Model of Interaction Stages in Relationships (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000)
- Sequences in Separation (Lee, 1984)

Table 1

A Comparison of Communication Models of Relationship Disengagement

Disengagement Phase	Knapp & Vangelisti (2000)	Duck (1984)	Lee (1984)
Distress	Differentiating	Breakdown	Dissatisfaction
Delimitation	Circumscribing	Intrapsychic Stage	Exposure
Disintegration	Stagnating	Dyadic Phase	Negotiation
Determination	Avoiding	Social Phase	Resolution
Disunion	Terminating	Grave Dressing Phase	Transformation

Although these models proffer some variation, I have categorized the stages with the labels Distress, Delimitation, Disintegration, Determination, and Disunion. The five D's

encompass the three models' (Duck, 1984; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000; Lee, 1984) five phases of disengagement and provides an overarching model of the stages of relational disengagement.

- *Distress* involves differentiation or recognition of individuality, the dissatisfaction of breakdown, and discovery of dissatisfaction.
- *Delimitation* comprises circumscribing behaviors (e.g., decreases in communication), psychological detachment of the intrapsychic stage, and exposure when displeasures are voiced.
- *Disintegration* entails the weakening of the relationship, such as stagnation (internal dialogue instead of external dialogue with the partner), the spoken discontent and confrontation of the partner during the dyadic phase, and negotiation tactics to discuss issues of contention.
- *Determination* includes avoiding face-to-face encounters, the social phase of telling others about the breakup and securing social support, and resolution (a decision is reached and action is planned).
- *Disunion* occurs through terminating the relationship, grave-dressing accounts of the ended union, or transformation (decreased or eliminated future encounters).

A Comparison of Relationship Disengagement Phases (Table 2) encapsulates the disengagement models using my classification of the five D's and provides representative dialogue or behaviors from each phase (Duck, 1984, p. 169; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000, p. 37; Lee, 1984, p. 51).

Table 2

A Comparison of Relationship Disengagement Phases

Disengagement Phase	Stage	Representative Dialogue/Behaviors
Distress	Differentiating	<i>Sometimes I don't understand you. This is one area where I'm certainly not like you at all.</i>
	Breakdown	<i>I can't stand this anymore.</i>
	Dissatisfaction	<i>I was the one who became discouraged with things.</i>
Delimitation	Circumscribing	<i>Did you have a good time on your trip? What time will dinner be ready?</i>
	Intrapsychic Stage	<i>I'd be justified in withdrawing.</i>
	Exposure	<i>He brought up the problem...he was angry and 'had to talk.'</i>
Disintegration	Stagnating	<i>What's there to talk about? Right. I know what you're going to say and you know what I'm going to say.</i>
	Dyadic Phase	<i>I mean it.</i>
	Negotiation	<i>We both made sure to talk about it...well, argue anyway...</i>
Determination	Avoiding	<i>I'm so busy, I just don't know when I'll be able to see you. If I'm not around when you try, you'll understand.</i>
	Social Phase	<i>It's now inevitable.</i>
	Resolution	<i>I made the decision because he couldn't... I had to—he wouldn't</i>
Disunion	Terminating	<i>I'm leaving you...and don't bother trying to contact me. Don't worry.</i>
	Grave Dressing	<i>Self-justification, 'getting over' activity, and marketing of one's own version of the breakup and its causes.</i>
	Transformation	<i>We both knew it was best. He cooperated. It was mutual.</i>

Flow Chart of Disengagement

Baxter's (1985) flow chart model presents a more complex view of disintegrating relationships. According to Baxter (1985), a dissolving relationship make take various possible trajectories. The process of breaking up is similar to a flow chart of decisions and their subsequent consequences. The disengagement process encompasses six paths or trajectories of relational dissolution:

- gradual vs. sudden onset of problems
- unilateral vs. bilateral desire to exit
- direct vs. indirect disengagement actions
- rapid vs. protracted disengagement negotiations
- presence vs. absence of repair attempts
- termination vs. continuation of the relationship (Baxter, 1985, p. 261).

Baxter (1985) concludes that five of the essential components of the dissolution process (excluding gradual vs. sudden onset) offer variation among disengagement paths.

However, Baxter (1985) asserts that additional research should attend to “patterned differences in relationship break-ups, rather than operating on the assumption that a single trajectory suffices to capture the process” (p. 263). The trajectory model posited in the Baxter (1985) study confirms that more than two thirds of the disengagements were not only indirectly initiated, but unilateral in nature.

The Problematic Nature of Extant Disengagement Models

While the above models of the disengagement process advanced by communication scholars are widely cited and used in numerous recent interpersonal communication texts (e.g., DeVito, 2000; Gamble & Gamble, 1998; Pearson & Nelson,

2000; Verderber & Verderber, 2001; Wood, 1999, 2000), several researchers allege that these models do not accurately reflect the communicative behaviors and responses of both partners. For example, Sprecher (1994) contends that the models of relationship termination are not representative of real life situations:

What does it mean that the initiation of breakups is likely to be viewed as nonmutual? It means that partners are unlikely to be in the same place of the breakup process at the same time. This finding of nonmutuality in breakups has implications for process models of breakups, such as that of Duck (1982), who suggested that individuals who desire to end their relationships go through four stages... (p. 211).

In the first empirical study of relationship termination, Hill, Rubin, and Peplau (1976) found that only seven percent of the disengaged couples considered the breakup as mutual. However, this study was limited by a small sample size of only 15 couples. Nonmutuality of premarital relationship breakups is confirmed in recent studies (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Helgeson, 1994; Hortacsu & Karanci, 1987; Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989). Sprecher (1994) further argues that models of relationship dissolution apply “only to the ‘leaver’ and says very little about what the process might be like for someone who is ‘left’” (p. 211).

When discussing models of relational disengagement, it is significant to note that the process of disengagement is not merely a linear reversal of the relationship formation and development process (Baxter, 1983; Duck, 1984; Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec, 1989). Although Altman and Taylor’s (1973) contention that relationship breakup is simply the relational growth process in reverse has been supported by alternative models of

relationship demise (e.g., Knapp, 1978; Miller & Parks, 1982; Phillips & Wood, 1983; Wood, 1982), it is inaccurate to simply invert the stages of coming together and assume that this is a common trajectory and linear explication for relationships that break down and end in termination (Duck, 1999a). During relational escalation, partners get to know more about each other, but during de-escalation, they cannot get to know less (Duck, 1999a, p. 91). Due to knowledge of the partner and predictability about the partner, intimates cannot merely revert to their earlier “stranger-like” condition (Baxter, 1985). Studies depicting the relationship termination model do not reflect the nonmutuality of the breakup process. Additionally, models of relational dissolution fail to account for the Non-Initiator’s perspective.

Models of Disengagement and Resistance to Breakups

Although models of relationship dissolution have explanatory power, they yield little knowledge about the actual strategies used by partners to *resist* a breakup. These models offer stages or phases from the perspective of the person who desires termination. Moreover, the nonmutuality factor that is present in most relationship terminations is not addressed. This is why knowledge about disengagement resistance strategies adds to the existing research on communication during dissolution. Actual resistance behaviors (let alone resistance to the very idea of breaking up) is not dealt with in these models. Explorations of how people attempt to resist a breakup will add insight to what we already know about the stages of coming apart.

Relationship Disengagement Strategies

The second focal area of communication research on relationship termination is disengagement strategies (Owen, 1993). Relationship break ups do not just “happen;”

certain strategies for disengagement are employed by one or both partners (Baxter, 1982). That is, when one partner decides to end the relationship, he or she must choose ways to communicate this to the partner (Weber, 1998). Because relationship dissolution is a type of compliance-gaining or social influence behavior, “messages seeking to terminate relationships inevitably embody a *persuasive* intent” (Miller & Parks, 1982, p. 140, italics original). Wilmot (1995) observes that in relational dissolution, the cooperation of the partner is unnecessary because “*it requires two persons to build a relationship but only one to destroy it*” (p. 120, italics original). Additionally, Wilmot (1995) notes the paradoxical nature of relationship disengagement strategies used by initiators: “It is precisely because the prospect of termination is so troubling to people that the tactics they use to end a relationship are often destructive and inhumane,” often appearing “nonsensical to an outsider” (p. 220). Investigations concerning disengagement reveal that initiators use both hurtful and diplomatic strategies to terminate relationships.

Typologies of Disengagement Strategies

Studies on disengagement strategies typically result in typologies. Four primary termination strategy types were identified in hypothetical terminations in Baxter’s (1982) study: open confrontation, withdrawal/ avoidance, positive tone, and manipulatory. Whereas the first two strategies (open confrontation and withdrawal/ avoidance) reflect directness-indirectness orientations, the latter two (positive tone and manipulatory) represent other-self orientations. The two variables of relationship closeness and perceived cause of the relationship demise were found to affect the disengager’s strategy selection (Baxter, 1982). For example, if the person initiating the breakup felt wronged by the other, or that the relationship itself was inequitable, the strategy chosen to

disengage is most likely manipulative or one that purposefully hurts the partner.

However, it is significant to note that Baxter's (1982) study of ending relationships focuses on friendships rather than romantic relationships.

Baxter and Philpott (1982) examine six disengagement strategies: other negation, difference, self-presentation, cost-rendering, disinterest, and exclusion. Cues by the partner demonstrating that the other is not liked are termed *other negation*. *Difference* refers to proving that the partner does not share common interests with the other. *Self-presentation* focuses on the presentations of an individual's negative characteristics. *Cost-rendering* occurs when one partner ceases to perform favors and increases the costs to the other. By employing *disinterest*, the partner refrains from acquiring additional information about the other. *Exclusion* tactics are used to avoid having the other in the partner's presence. Results further revealed that partners used exclusion and other negation most often to terminate relationships (Baxter & Philpott, 1982).

Baxter's (1984, 1985) studies examined retrospective reports of initiators' termination strategies and identified eight: withdrawal, pseudo-escalation, cost escalation, fait accompli, state-of-the-relationship talk, fading away, attributional conflict, and negotiated farewell. Whereas those who use *withdrawal* tend to avoid the partner, those who employ *pseudo-escalation* proclaim a false declaration of desiring to transform the relationship to a reduced level of closeness--all the while having no intention of continuing the relationship. *Cost escalation* behaviors include indirect actions that increase relational costs in order to disengage without an explicit statement. Partners who use *fait accompli* explicitly state to the other that the relationship is terminated. However, the *state-of-the-relationship* talk not only states why the partner wants to exit the

relationship, but also reasons for dissatisfaction. *Fading away* is typified by the mutual, yet implicit understanding by both partners that the relationship is over. *Attributional conflict* is characterized by partners' desires to end the relationship following a heated argument. *Negotiated farewell* explicitly and formally terminates the union, yet without hostility and argumentativeness.

Direct vs. Indirect Termination Communication

Baxter (1985) notes that findings of her studies continually point to a basic set of disengagement strategies that vary on two dimensions: directness and other orientation. While partners who use direct strategies expressly state their desire to end the relationship, leavers who use other-orientation are generally less explicit so as to avoid hurting the partner. While indirect strategies include withdrawal, pseudo-escalation, and cost escalation, Baxter (1985) contends that direct strategies are comprised of fait accompli, state-of-the-relationship talk, fading away, attributional conflict, and negotiated farewell. Moreover, Baxter (1985) concludes that although directness is a predominant characteristic of the disengagement process, endings of most relationships are the result of indirect termination strategies (e.g., withdrawal). Baxter (1985) uses three dimensions to characterize clusters of disengagement strategies: direct versus indirect, unilateral versus bilateral, and other-orientation versus self-orientation:

- *Indirect-unilateral*: withdrawal, pseudo-de-escalation, and cost escalation.
- *Indirect-bilateral*: mutual pseudo-de-escalation and fading away.
- *Direct-unilateral*: fait accompli and state-of-the-relationship talk.
- *Direct-bilateral*: attributional conflict and negotiated farewell.
- *Self-orientation*: cost escalation, fait accompli, withdrawal, and attributional conflict.

- *Other-orientation*: state-of-the-relationship talk, pseudo-de-escalation, bilateral pseudo-de-escalation, fading way, and negotiated farewell.

Although American society purports to value direct, open communication (Katriel & Philipsen, 1990), relational partners often use indirect communication to exit the relationship (Baxter, 1984; Lee, 1984). Noting that directness/indirectness is a significant dimension of the process of relationship dissolution, Baxter (1982) investigated two types of relationship termination: “unilateral” (break up initiated by one partner) versus “bilateral” (both partners agreeing to terminate) and determined that unilateral terminations were characterized by the use of more manipulative than indirect strategies. However, disengagers tend to save face through indirect communication about termination (Wilmot, Carbaugh, & Baxter, 1985).

While spouses must eventually face their partners when disengaging from the marital relationship, this is not necessarily the case for less formal relationships (Duck, 1999a). For example, some partners do not confront each other directly but instead just withdraw from the relationship--an option unavailable to most married couples (Baxter, 1984; Lee, 1984; Wood, 2000). Due to the legal ramifications of divorce (e.g., division of property, custody issues, court processes, and paperwork involved), disengaging married couples must communicate more than unmarried couples. In addition to communication concerning official matters, divorcing couples have more intense interpersonal issues to address. Metts’ (1992, 1997) concept of “severity of offense” argues that communication during the unbonding process is different for couples whose lives are more enmeshed and how fervently the termination is desired by one partner comparative to the other.

Metts, Cupach, and Bejlovec's (1989) study assessed both initiator and Non-Initiator disengagement strategy selection. Noting the paucity of studies focusing on the Non-Initiator, Metts, Cupach, and Bejlovec (1989) observe, "quantitative studies, especially those of communicative strategies, tend to rely exclusively on data from respondents who initiated the breakup" (p. 264). Findings revealed that disengagement strategies used by initiators and Non-Initiators' perceptions of initiators' use of disengagement strategies were almost identical. Initiators reported using four strategies to end a relationship: withdrawal, positive tone, manipulation, and directness. Interestingly, Non-Initiators reported that disengagers used the same four strategies.

Additionally, Knapp (1978) posits that two characteristics of withdrawal strategies exist: 1) distance: increasing psychological separation and nonimmediacy; and 2) disassociation: behaviors exhibiting increasing concern for self and decreasing concern for the relationship. Regardless of the mechanism used to exit a relationship, Knapp (1978) maintains that disengagement dialogue is typified by messages that exhibit both distance and disassociation. The concepts of distance and disassociation (Knapp, 1978) are similar to Baxter's (1985) dimensions of disengagement strategies: directness and other orientation.

Cody's (1982) typology of disengagement, formulated from the initiator's perspective, lists five strategies that individuals employ in order to disengage from an intimate relationship: behavioral de-escalation, de-escalation, justification, positive tone, and negative identity management. *Behavioral de-escalation* strategies were comprised of statements in which the disengager reported avoiding the partner and making no verbal statements. *De-escalation* statements were those in which the disengager requested that

the partners see less of each other. When the initiator explained reasons for desiring relationship termination, these statements were termed *Justification*. A strategy was coded *positive tone* if the disengager expressed grief over ending the relationship or stated that he or she still cared about the partner. *Negative identity management* strategies indicated a strong dislike for the partner or general lack of concern for the partner's feelings.

Reactions to relationship decline are explicated in Rusbult's (1987) study of the exit-voice-loyalty-neglect model. These four strategies (exit, voice, loyalty, neglect) are predicted by both relationship quality and individuals' personal qualities. The *exit* response designates that a partner leaves the relationship, either physically or psychologically. The *neglect* response occurs when a partner denies or minimizes relational problems or refuses to discuss the problems with the mate. The *loyalty* response involves silently staying in a relationship that is in distress. The *voice* response involves direct intervention efforts to discuss and repair relational difficulties. Whereas *exiting* the relationship and *neglecting* the partner are destructive behaviors associated with pending relational termination, *voicing* concerns and being *loyal* are considered constructive behaviors. Additionally, each reaction represents dimensions of passive (neglect, loyalty) or active (exit, voice) actions in approaching relationship problems. Most relevant to the present study is the exit response, which is considered a destructive action for a relationship. The exit response is characteristic of couples with low relationship satisfaction, low relationship investment, and appealing relationship alternatives (Rusbult, 1987). Goodwin (1991) empirically tested and evaluated Rusbult's (1987) typology. Although Goodwin's (1991) research found the loyalty response ambiguous,

support was evidenced for the exit, voice, and neglect responses, thus validating Rusbult's (1987) Responses to Dissatisfaction Typology. For a comparison of various scholars' disengagement strategies, see Relationship Disengagement Strategies Index (Table 3).

Table 3

Relationship Disengagement Strategies Index

Cody (1982)	Behavioral de-escalation De-escalation Justification Positive tone Negative identity management
Baxter (1982)	Open confrontation Withdrawal/ avoidance Positive tone Manipulatory
Baxter & Philpott (1982)	Other negation Difference Self-presentation Cost-rendering Disinterest Exclusion
Baxter (1984, 1985)	Withdrawal Pseudo-escalation Cost escalation Fait accompli State-of-the-relationship talk Fading away Attributional conflict Negotiated farewell
Metts, Cupach, & Bejlovec (1989)	Withdrawal Positive tone Manipulation Directness
Rusbult (1987)	Exit Voice Loyalty Neglect

The relationship disengagement studies explained above focus on non-romantic relationships, unmarried couples, and breakup strategies employed by the initiator. However, the present study explores a different perspective by examining disengagement resistance strategies used by partners undesirous of a marital breakup. Regardless of the strategy used in termination, separated partners recount the how's and why's of the unraveled relationship through "accounts"—a topic of communication research discussed in the following section.

Relationship Disengagement Strategies and Resistance to Breakups

While much of the relationship dissolution literature focuses on strategies used by initiators to accomplish relational termination, very little research addresses strategies used to resist a breakup. Although disengaging from a relationship requires strategic communicative behaviors, likewise, breakup resistance behaviors are characteristically strategic. Resistance to breaking up parallels disengagement strategies because both are attempts at achieving comprehensive relational goals: the initiator desires termination whereas the Non-Initiator opposes the ending of the partnership. How relational partners communicate depends upon the nature and quality of the relationship (Duck, 1999; Fitzpatrick, 1999; Miller, 1976; Montgomery, 1988). Whereas non-initiators communicate decreased levels of commitment and intimacy, Non-Initiators communicate a desire to preserve or increase relationship commitment and intimacy. In addition to having relational goals that alter the state of the relationship, partners who are disengaging or resisting employ instrumental goals--that is, specific strategies to achieve an overall objective. This study explores Non-Initiators' use of instrumental goals

(disengagement resistance strategies) to attain a relational goal (relationship continuation).

Accounts of Relational Break Ups

The third main area of communication research on relationship termination is accounts of break ups (Owen, 1993). Stories that retrospectively explain how events occurred and patterns of interaction in relationships were originally termed “accounts” by Weiss (1975) in his research on marital separation. Attribution investigators, such as Burnett (1991) define accounts as “how people make sense of their world in their private reflection and analysis as well as in shared communication” (p. 122). Therefore, “‘accounting,’ in its broadest sense, refers to all attempts to understand and explain experience” (Burnett, 1991, p. 122). Relational accounts provide understanding for relational partners’ interaction patterns (Fisher & Adams, 1994) and, as such, partners utilize accounts to make sense of their relationships (Harvey, Agostinelli, & Weber, 1989).

Research on relational dissolution often focuses on the account-making process. According to McCall (1982), creating a publicly acceptable story is crucial in getting over the termination of an intimate relationship. Failure to perform account making after relationship loss has three conceivable negative repercussions: continuance of negative emotions, enduring bereavement and distress, and failure to acquire more realistic beliefs about relational life (Canary, Cody, & Manusov, 2000; Harvey, Orbuch, Weber, Merbach, & Alt, 1992).

Although partners in the process of breaking up may not be completely honest in their reasons for wanting to exit the relationship (Hagestad & Smyer, 1982; Knox, 1985),

their later accounts tend to reflect more fully the partner's reasons for wanting out (Duck 1982; Weber, 1992a, 1992b). McCall (1982) reports various metaphors that ex-partners use to describe the deterioration of their former relationship (e.g., the relationship became "a cage"). In addition to expressing thoughts, metaphors "structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4).

Vaughn (1990) asserts that partners concomitantly redefine and reconstruct different accounts of the demise of the relationship during various relational turning points. In their study of communicating "what went wrong" in relational conflicts, Weber, Harvey, and Orbuch (1992) conclude that "the account-maker forges a renewed identity by communicating the account and *being done with it*" (p. 278, italics original). Similarly, Miell (1987) contends that relationship accounts are reconstructed retrospectively. Relational partners often "editorialize," presenting their view of relational reality according to perceived need and circumstance (Duck & Pond, 1989) or purify their relationship histories in retrospect (Duck & Sants, 1983). Kowalski (1997) judiciously notes that we are more likely to seek meaning for negative than positive interactions. Interestingly, when our encounters with our partners are buoyant, we do not feel the need to question why things are going well. However, if the interaction with a partner is unsatisfactory, we feel compelled to explain or account for the negativity that transpired (Kowalski, 1997).

Holtzworth-Munroe and Jacobsen (1985) contend that breakups are triggered by some type of attributional activity—either something unexpected or unpleasant has occurred—thus resulting in a partner's asking "Why?". In a study of maritally separated couples, Weiss' (1975) concept of "obsessive review" structures the search for

explanations as “a constant, absorbing, sometimes maddening preoccupation that refuses to accept any conclusion” (p. 79). Leick and Davidsen-Nielsen’s (1991) task model of grief—also applicable to relationship dissolution—identifies four tasks that a disengaged person must accomplish: recognize the loss, release emotions, develop new skills, and reinvest emotional energy.

In addition to a social network that aids in disconfirming a relationship or a relational partner, people also feel a need to disengage in such a way that their reputation or credibility for future relationships is still intact. LaGaipa’s (1982) conceptualization of “social credit” maintains that in order not to be stigmatized or excluded from future relationships, people give accounts of the relational ex-partner as completely impossible or of the relationship itself as unable to overcome insurmountable odds. Social credit is aligned with the conception of face-saving. Two studies investigating events that increase uncertainty in interpersonal relationships examined various types of events that may precipitate relationship termination: competing relationships, unexplained loss of contact or closeness, sexual behavior, deception, change in personality or values, and betraying confidence (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985; Planalp, Rutherford, & Honeycutt, 1988).

Reasons why people leave relationships vary, but most people who disengage seek reassurance and support from their social networks (Duck, 1984). Leavers look for reinforcement from others, specifically when it comes to confirming the leaver’s account of events and the partner’s faults (Duck, 1999a). Moreover, people may strategically redefine their view of the partner—selecting characteristics that seemed initially attractive and recasting them as negative—thus actualizing the process of “disenchantment” (Hatfield & Rapson, 1993). Felmlee (1995) terms these transformations that shift from

positive to negative as “fatal attractions.” The label “fatal attraction” reflects current reverse sentiments toward the relational partner. For example, a mate who appeared exciting and impulsive at the beginning of a relationship may now seem irresponsible and unpredictable. What once attracted us, now repels us. Features of a partner that were previously considered as “fatal attractions” are now viewed as “fatal flaws” (Felmlee, 1995; 1998).

Decisions to terminate relationships may hinge on partners’ perceived social and psychological barriers to dissolution. In a study investigating the social-psychological construct of barriers, Attridge (1994) isolated internal, or psychological, barriers to relational dissolution (commitment/obligations, religious beliefs, self-identity, investments, and children) and external, or structural, barriers (legal, financial, and social). Barriers to relationship dissolution can be social or psychological, and they represent restraints on exiting a relationship.

In a longitudinal study of gay and lesbian couples, Kurdek (1996) found that relationship quality deterioration was predicted by an increase in personal autonomy and change in positivity toward the partner. Van Lange, Rusbult, Drigotas, Arriaga, and Witcher (1997) found that couples reporting that they are willing to sacrifice for their relationships have stronger commitment, higher satisfaction, and higher investments in their relationships. Similarly, the use of forgiveness as a relational turning point helps to predict whether a relationship becomes destructive or constructive (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997).

Reasons for Terminating Relationships

Literature examining reasons why people divorce includes communication problems (Bloom, Hodges, & Caldwell, 1983; Cupach & Metts, 1986; Kitson & Sussman, 1982); sexual incompatibility (Burns, 1984; Thurnher, Fenn, Melichar, & Chiriboga, 1983); gender role conflicts (Cupach & Metts, 1986); lack of companionship (Hays, Stinnett, & DeFrain, 1980); financial troubles (Albrecht, Bahr, & Goodman, 1983); and control issues (Hays, et al., 1980).

Hill, Rubin, and Peplau's (1976) seminal study on relationship dissolution reported the most highly rated reasons for breaking up as: boredom with the relationship, differences in interests, and a partner's desire to be independent. In a similar study, Hortacsu and Karanci (1987) found that the three most common reasons for relational breakup were incompatibility, geographical distance, and the partner's personality. Stephen (1987) categorized reasons for breaking up as specific attributions: other (characteristics of the other), self (characteristics of the self), interpersonal (interactional or communicative processes), and external (external forces or incidents). Some studies report that women identify more reasons for breaking up than do men (Baxter, 1984; Cupach & Metts, 1986). Not surprisingly, married couples who disengaged report more complex accounts of their breakups than those of premarital couples (Baxter, 1984). In a study of divorced women, Newman and Langer (1981) found that those who blamed their ex-spouses for the dissolution were less well adjusted to the divorce than were those who made "interactive attributions" (imputing relationship failure due to incompatibility, lifestyle changes, or lack of communication between partners).

Accounts and Resistance to Breakups

Unlike the other two primary avenues of communication research on disengagement (process models of disengagement or strategies used to end relationships), accounts involve partners' actual descriptions of the former partner and relationship. Accounts are significant in that they relate to disengagement resistance strategies. Whereas accounts provide spoken or written retrospective versions of the previous relational partner and their lives together, resistance strategies are communicative performances occurring during the process of the couple unraveling. Moreover, both are important in gaining a fuller understanding of relationship dissolution processes.

Accounts and disengagement resistance strategies involve acknowledging the end of a significant romantic relationship. Additionally, accounts and resisting disengagement involve facework. Motivation to be polite is marginal during relational disengagement because a spouse has access to more personal and intimate information about their mate than do others (Canary, Cody, & Manusov, 2000). Whether constructing an account of a previous relationship or implementing a strategy to resist a breakup, facework is apparent in both.

From the Non-Initiator's Perspective

Although a large amount of research has been conducted on the processes, strategies, and accounts of relationship termination, only a handful of studies address communication from the Non-Initiator's point of view. The sparse research on unilateral breakups from the Non-Initiator viewpoint frequently focuses on emotional reactions of the Non-Initiator.

How the Non-Initiator handles the break up of a relationship has been addressed in interdisciplinary studies (Buss & Schmidt, 1993; Gray & Silver, 1990; Hill, Rubin, & Peplau, 1976; Kurdek, 1991, 1997; Stephen, 1987), but relatively little research has been conducted in the communication field (Lloyd & Cate, 1985; Sprecher, 1994). Sprecher's (1994) study of 47 ex-partners used an instrument to measure emotional reactions after the breakup, perceived control over the breakup, and reasons for the breakup. Sprecher (1994) describes the emotional results for the couple: the "partner who leaves for someone else feels guilt but little resentment and loneliness. The partner who is abandoned feels resentment and loneliness but little guilt" (p. 209). Being rejected by an intimate partner conveys a powerfully humiliating message (Aronson & Linder, 1965). Weber (1998) notes: "The later in a relationship the rejection comes, the greater the negative impact" on the left's self esteem (p. 314). Moreover, Buss and Schmitt (1993) assert the theoretical principle of sociobiology, which assumes that typically, men are more upset than women when they lose their partner to a competitor. Ending a relationship with a significant partner was studied by Simpson (1987) and results of the investment-model study showed that three factors predict serious emotional distress in ending romantic relationships: closeness of ex-partners, length of dating, and perceptions of ability to acquire a desirable alternative partner.

However, many of the most widely-cited communication studies on emotional responses to relationship termination do not take into account actual relationship experiences. Moreover, these studies often center on friendships or hypothetical romantic relationships. For example, studies on reactions to hypothetical terminations (Baxter, 1982; Baxter & Philpott, 1982) and studies of non-married relationship termination using

retrospective recall by romantic ex-partners (Baxter, 1983; Cody, 1982) do not reflect actual marital relationship disengagement communicative processes.

Communication Models of Disengagement, Disengagement Strategies, Accounts, and Disengagement Resistance Strategies

In sum, communication research on relationship disengagement has focused on models or process stages of disengagement, strategies used by the initiator to terminate the relationship, and partners' retrospective accounts of the breakup (Owen, 1993). A review of this research shows a lack of focus on the person left behind, or the Non-Initiator. Moreover, communication research on disengagement has focused on romantic dating partners and friends, while neglecting strategies used by married partners who do not desire divorce. This study focuses on strategies that Non-Initiators use to resist the breakup of their marriages. In addition, psychosocial factors affecting communicative behaviors of Non-Initiators in resisting marital dissolution have not been addressed. These relationship demographic variables may influence particular resistance strategy choices by the mate who does not desire divorce. Strategies that Non-Initiators use—disengagement resistance strategies—and the influence of specific relationship demographic variables on strategy selection provide a fresh approach in exploring the unbonding of married couples.

Disengagement Resistance Strategies

The nonmutuality factor, operating in most relationship dissolution processes (Baxter, 1985; Davis, 1973; Vaughn, 1990) should be taken into consideration when studying the communicative behaviors of partners involved in unraveling relationships. Because it is unlikely that both partners are in agreement about terminating the

relationship, the person with “initiator status” usually calls the shots. So how does the “left” respond to the “leaver”? What strategies do Non-Initiators employ in response to initiators’ attempt(s) to disengage?

The theoretical paradigm of evolutionary psychology posits that patterned psychological sex differences are manifested through behavioral strategies such as mate selection, intrasexual competition, and mate retention (Buss, 1995; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). Psychological sex differences include the adaptive issues of paternity uncertainty, identification of reproductively valuable women, sexual access to women, and identification of men who are able or willing to invest (Buss, 1994). Although men and women share psychological similarities, evolutionary psychology provides an account of the social context in which these differences are expressed (Buss, 1996).

Differences in manipulation tactics deployed by members of various relationships (e.g., spousal, friendships, parental) were examined by Buss (1992). This study found that spouses used more relational manipulation tactics with each other than they did with friends or parents (Buss, 1992). Tactics used most frequently within spousal relationships include coercion, responsibility invocation, charm, and regression. Within friendships, tactics most frequently involve the use of hardball, reciprocity, debasement, social comparison, and monetary reward. In parental relationships, manipulation tactics involve the use of hardball, debasement, reason, and monetary reward (Buss, 1992).

Fundamental differences between males and females also point to specific predictions about conjugal distress between husbands and wives (Buss, 1989; 1991). For example, in a study assessing consequences of anger and upset in married couples’

sources of marital dissatisfaction, findings revealed that whereas men's marital dissatisfaction is associated with women's sexual withholding, women's dissatisfaction is linked with men's sexual aggressiveness (Buss, 1989). Mate guarding tactics (Shackelford & Buss, 1997) used by married couples may either promote marital happiness or lead to marital decay.

Current communication scholars have utilized the evolutionary psychological perspective in their research. For example, studies on relational jealousy and envy (e.g., Andersen, Eloy, Guerrero, & Spitzberg, 1995; Guerrero, Andersen, Jorgensen, Spitzberg, & Eloy, 1995) refer to Buss's (1994) concept of mate selection. Felmlee's (1995, 1998) theory of fatal attraction--patterns of relational disillusionment--incorporate mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988). The current study expands and extends the conception of mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997) in order to analyze the deployment of disengagement resistance strategies as a communicative mechanism to retain a spouse.

In an investigation concerning strategies that people employ to prevent their mates from straying, Buss (1988, p. 297) designated a taxonomy of mate retention tactics ranging from "vigilance to violence" (Table 4). Buss (1988) conducted three empirical studies to identify, report performance frequencies, and evaluate the effectiveness of "19 tactics and 104 acts of human mate guarding and retention" (p. 291). These studies focus on sex differences concerning American undergraduates' (mean age = 19.16 years) use of mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988). The first part of Study 1 (Buss, 1988) resulted in a taxonomy of mate retention tactics developed from a pool of nominated acts (N = 105). The second part of Study 1 (Buss, 1988) assessed the reported performance frequencies

of 19 retention tactics and 104 acts ($N = 102$). Study 2 (Buss, 1988) evaluated the perceived effectiveness of each tactic. Findings from Buss' (1988) studies draw implications for the evolutionary psychology perspective on specific predictions about sex differences in use of mate retention tactics. Buss and Shackelford (1997) extended mate retention research by focusing on tactics used by newlywed couples.

Table 4

Taxonomy of Mate Retention Tactics

(Buss, 1988)

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Appearance enhancement | 11. Physical possession signals |
| 2. Commitment manipulation | 12. Possessive ornamentation |
| 3. Concealment of mate | 13. Punish mate's infidelity threat |
| 4. Derogation of competitors | 14. Resource display |
| 5. Derogation of mate | 15. Sexual inducement |
| 6. Emotional manipulation | 16. Submission and debasement |
| 7. Intrasexual threats | 17. Verbal possession signals |
| 8. Jealousy induction | 18. Vigilance |
| 9. Love and care | 19. Violence against rivals |
| 10. Monopolization of time | |

In order to retain a mate, a spouse may try *appearance enhancement* by purchasing new clothes or other attempts to make himself/herself more attractive. *Commitment manipulation* refers to asking a partner for total commitment or proposing marriage. When a partner purposely limits the spouse's contact with friends or family, this is considered *mate concealment*. *Derogation of competitors* and *derogation of mate* are both used in verbal or written messages to a) convey displeasure of others who might be considered as competition to the spouse, or b) disapproval of the mate through name-calling and put-downs. *Emotional manipulation* may be used to induce guilt by crying, pleading, or threatening to harm oneself, whereas *intrasexual threats* are threats to others who might come between the marriage partners. By employing *jealousy induction*, a spouse threatens the mate with infidelity by flirting or spending time with another. *Love and care* may be exhibited by outward signs of helping the mate in his/her activity, such as mowing the lawn or moving furniture. *Monopolization of time* includes insisting that the mate spend all his or her free time with the partner. *Physical possession signals*, such as publicly holding hands or kissing indicates to others that the mate is taken. *Possessive ornamentation* occurs when a spouse (generally the female) wears the husband's apparel. To *punish a mate's infidelity threat*, the spouse might threaten to break up if the partner ever cheated. Examples of *resource display* are giving presents to a mate, spending money, or sending flowers. *Sexual inducement*, such as leaving sexy lingerie where the partner can see it, is used by some marital partners. Some spouses resort to *submission and debasement* by conveying their willingness to "do anything" for the mate, give in to the partner's wishes, or act against her or his will to let the spouse have his or her way. *Verbal possession signals*, i. e., manners of introduction, or nicknames for an intimate,

serve as an indication to others that s(he) is “mine.” Acts of *vigilance* include calling the mate or dropping by unexpectedly to check on his/her location or verify whereabouts. A vigilant spouse insists on knowing where and whom the spouse is with at all times. Finally, the spouse may resort to *violence against rivals* by physically fighting or vandalizing the property of an individual who has shown interest in the partner.

Buss (1988) divides these tactics into two major categories: intersexual manipulations and intrasexual manipulations. While the former category refers to acts directed toward the relational partner, the latter category pertains to acts directed toward potential competitors. Table 5 illustrates the mate retention tactics according to whether they are classified as intersexual or intrasexual manipulations.

Table 5

Mate Retention Tactics as Intersexual or Intrasexual Manipulations (Buss, 1988)

<i>Intersexual Manipulations</i> (Acts directed toward the partner)	<i>Intrasexual Manipulations</i> (Acts directed toward potential competitors)
Appearance enhancement	Physical possession signals
Commitment manipulation	Possessive ornamentation
Concealment of mate	Resource display
Punish mate's infidelity threat	Derogation of competitors
Derogation of mate	Intrasexual threats
Emotional manipulation	Verbal possession signals
Sexual inducement	Violence against rivals
Submission and debasement	
Jealousy induction	
Love and care	
Monopolization of time	
Vigilance	

In Buss and Shackelford's (1997) study of mate retention tactics used by married couples, results indicate that partners use particular strategies to keep a partner from straying. According to this research, males stated that they are most likely to use resource display, submission and debasement, and intrasexual threats to retain their mates, whereas women reported using appearance enhancement and verbal signals of possession (Buss & Shackelford, 1997). However, if a partner believes that his or her mate might potentially be unfaithful or if there is a perceived threat of infidelity, males engaged in greater concealment of mate, punishment of mates' infidelity threat, and derogation of competitors. Inversely, women's perceptions of the probability of mate defection were not significantly correlated with the use of mate retention tactics.

However, the 214 subjects used in the Buss and Shackelford (1997) study consisted of 107 newly-wed pairs married one year or less. Problematic to this study is the fact that newlyweds can only predict what they would do given an inexperienced circumstance. Furthermore, newlyweds are not the most suitable subjects for a study on relational termination. Therefore, it is proffered that newly-married couples' *perceptions* of their *predicted* partner retention strategies would differ greatly from those who are currently engaged in the process of, or actually have gone through relationship disengagement. As previously mentioned, Baxter (1987) notes that indirect strategies are the most commonly used methods to disengage from a relationship. Despite the prevalence of indirect disengagement strategy use, Metts (1992) asserts that this is not true for most married relationships:

It is difficult to imagine, however, that a couple married for 21 years with three children could simply 'stop being married' by reducing eye contact and not

calling anymore. Partners in established relationships can signal diminished feelings indirectly but cannot declare exemption for role-related obligations and rights without going on record. Data obtained almost exclusively from premarital couples have obscured important distinctions (p. 126).

The present study overcomes these limitations by using divorced subjects who did not initiate termination of the relationship. This study examines members of couples who have a vested interest in an intimate (marital) relationship as opposed to relationships with dating partners, newlyweds, friends, acquaintances, or strangers. Further, the current study avoids the “Sophomoros academicus Americanus” limitation (Wood & Duck, 1995, p. 14) by using divorced adults as participants. Bullis, Clark, and Sline’s (1993) study of turning points in romantic relationships used a sample comprised of partners over the age of 25 and found differences in findings about romantic relationships between college-age youths and adults. Because the sample of the present study is not comprised of undergraduates, the life experiences of participants and the mean age (36) is increased.

Relationship Demographic Variables

Marital instability and dissolution are linked to a diverse set of personal demographic variables and relationship demographic variables (Morgan & Rindfuss, 1985; Raschke, 1987). The demographic approach to studying relationship dissolution identifies particular variables that place a relationship at risk for dissolution (e.g., Greenstein, 1990; Heaton, Albrecht, & Martin, 1985). As Kurdek (1993) explicates: “The demographic approach places importance on demographic variables representing personal qualities of the partners as well as characteristics of their previous and current experiences in relationships” (p. 221). Further, in his study of psychosocial predictors of

divorce, Kurdek (1993) acknowledges: “Although divorce is a major negative life event, little is known about the intrapersonal and interpersonal processes that predict it” (p. 221). Although numerous demographic predictors of divorce have been identified (Bumpass, Castro Martin, & Sweet, 1991), “comparatively little is known about the psychosocial characteristics and processes that are associated with marital dissolution” (Tucker, Kressin, Spiro, & Ruscio, 1998, p. 212).

Tucker, Kressin, Spiro, and Ruscio (1998) investigated intrapersonal predictors of earlier divorce (fewer than 20 years of marriage) and later divorce (20 or more years of marriage). Although the divorce predictor variables in the study included neuroticism, disagreeableness, and impulsivity/lack of conscientiousness, partners rated as more disagreeable and impulsive were at a higher risk for earlier divorce (Tucker, et al., 1998). However, results of the study showed that intrapersonal characteristics associated with earlier divorces are not necessarily predictive of divorces that occur later (Tucker, et al., 1998). Becker’s (1991) model of marital dissolution advocates that divorces occurring earlier in the marriage are greatly influenced by acquisition of unfavorable information about the spouse, whereas divorces occurring later in the marriage are more strongly influenced by changes and life events impacting the marriage.

In a longitudinal study examining the influence of spouses’ sociodemographic and attitudinal characteristics on marital disruption, Heaton and Blake (1999) found that wives’ variables have a stronger influence on the maintenance of marital relationships. Moreover, wives were found to be more sensitive to problems in the marriage, and thus, wives perform a more dominant role in marital maintenance than husbands (Heaton & Blake, 1999).

Several contemporary studies on marital relationship dissolution have emphasized the impact of relationship demographic variables as predictors of divorce. For example, Kurdek's (1993) longitudinal study on marital dissolution assessed "risk variables from the demographic approach" (a.k.a. "relationship demographic variables") that included: divorce history, number of months the spouses had known each other, whether spousal finances were pooled, and the presence of children in the marriage. In another study, current marital status, age at marriage, and years of education were investigated as predictors of divorce (Tucker, et al., 1998). The current study utilizes relationship demographic variables as psychosocial predictors of disengagement resistance strategy use.

Rationale and Research Questions

Communicative disparities exist between the stages of coming together and the stages of coming apart. During the stages of coming together, the dyad undergoes and experiences the stages together. However, when partners uncouple, it is usually one person (the initiator or jilter), desirous of a breakup, working against the Non-Initiator (or resister) who does not want the relationship to end. Prior to the relationship actually disconnecting, thoughts about breaking up begin with one person--the initiator. As Baxter (1982) notes, "Once a disengager has made the cognitive and affective separation from the other in the decision to end the relationship, she or he may not perceive an interdependent state with the other party..." (p. 237). At the outset of the coming apart stages, the initiator makes the decision to disengage, and that same individual signals the partner (actively or passively) of his or her desire to withdraw from the relationship (Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). According to Canary, Cody, and Manusov (2000), the more

intimate the relationship, the more likely the initiator will use some form of verbal message to disengage. Additionally, the ensuing disengaging behaviors are communicated either directly or indirectly by the initiator. Differing expectations about one's own and the other's perceived levels of relationship involvement and commitment are key issues in relational disengagement.

Unlike the stages of coming together, the coming apart stages occur with each member of the dyad in dissimilar thought patterns, relational stages, and communicative behaviors. When relationships unravel, it is unnecessary, yet anomalous, for both partners to experience the coming apart concurrently. Davis (1973) notes that most relationship breakups do not occur in synchronization--"unilateral terminations" in which one partner wishes to exit the relationship are more prevalent than "bilateral terminations" (p. 261). Similarly, Baxter states (1982) that most relationships end unilaterally and "initiator status" is significant for communicative practices during relational termination. According to Vaughn (1990), the collapse of a relationship, or "uncoupling," occurs at different times for each partner:

Most often, one person wants out while the other person wants the relationship to continue. Although both partners must go through all the same stages of the transition in order to uncouple, the transition begins and ends at different times for each. By the time the still-loving partner realized the relationship is in serious trouble, the other person is already gone in a number of ways. The rejected partner then embarks on a transition that the other person began long before.

Understanding uncoupling consequently hinges on examining the process in

relation to whether one is the initiator or the partner being left behind (p. 6, italics added).

Understanding the Non-Initiator's perspective has salient implications for the process models of relational disengagement. These models assert that couples proceed together through particular stages of disengaging, when in reality, couples experience the stages independently of one another. For relationships to form and develop, partners must be in agreement. However, for relationships to terminate, no agreement between the couple is necessary for it to occur. Therefore, it is not uncommon for the initiator to induce a unilateral breakup, leaving the other partner uninformed or confused. When the initiator expresses a desire to detach, the partner must and does respond. *How a Non-Initiator responds* to the initiator's attempts to break off the relationship is the focus of the present study. Non-Initiators' responses to initiators' relationship severance moves are referred to as *Disengagement Resistance Strategies* (DRS).

Research in the communication discipline on relationship disengagement does not emphasize strategies employed by Non-Initiators. The available knowledge concerning Non-Initiators is limited because it focuses on emotional reactions to the breakup. Furthermore, mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997) comprise only a portion of goal-seeking behaviors called strategies. What is needed is to understand Non-Initiator strategic communicative behaviors during relationship disengagement. The overall purpose of this dissertation is to decipher the multiple tactics that form particular strategies used by Non-Initiators. Wiemann and Daly (1994) note that in most cases, individuals do not engage in using only one strategy to obtain a goal (p. xiii). Consequently, the probability is unlikely that a Non-Initiator uses a single tactic

when his or her partner attempts to disengage from the relationship. Since individuals operate from a strategic perspective to achieve social goals, communicative strategies implemented by Non-Initiators during relationship disengagement must be studied.

The present study expands the results of studies on mate retention (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997) to focus on strategic disengagement communicative patterns of Non-Initiators. This study differs from mate retention research in that the current study centers on strategies used by Non-Initiators to delay or avoid a relational breakup, not simple sex differences in tactic use. Further, the current study does not use college undergraduate romantic pairs or newlyweds as participants. Instead, the current study asks divorced Non-Initiators to identify use of Disengagement Resistance Strategies. Divorced partners resisting a marital breakup are more qualified to identify actual strategy employment than are individuals in less committed relationships. The current study identifies particular communicative strategies employed by Non-Initiators. Specifically, the goals of the current project are to a) explore associations among Buss and Shackelford's (1997) mate retention tactics to reveal quantifiable strategic indices of Non-Initiators and b) identify particular relationship demographic variables as predictors of disengagement resistance strategy use.

First, factor analysis will be used to condense the Buss (1988) mate retention taxonomy into a more parsimonious number of overall strategies. In addition to the merit of parsimony, there is a greater heuristic value in a smaller number of higher order categories (Field, 2000). The study of relational dissolution can be improved by reducing a large array of tactics to fewer, specific strategies identified by divorced individuals whom actually experienced marital dissolution. Additionally, the study of marital

relationship dissolution is improved because participants are actual divorced individuals who lend true insight into strategies used to resist a marital breakup.

Two research questions guide the current study. The legitimacy of posing research questions as opposed to hypotheses is twofold. First, there is a deficiency in communication literature on disengagement resistance. Research in the communication field on disengagement focuses mainly on strategies used by partners who want to end the relationship, not partners who want to continue the relationship. Specific research on what strategies Non-Initiators use to resist the breakup has not been conducted. Additionally, sparse communication research addresses marital disengagement. Second, there is a lack of clear evidence indicating the expected nature of the relationship among the variables. Relationship demographic variables such as those in this study, have not been examined from the perspective of communication during marital disengagement. Based on these observations, and due to the fact that the current study is exploratory in nature, research questions rather than hypothesis predictions are posed. However, as a probing investigation, this study serves as the foundation for a proposed line of research on communication and marital relationship dissolution.

RQ1: What are the factor analytic dimensions of Buss' (1988) mate retention taxonomy?

The second purpose of this study is to explore specific relationship demographic variables (Kurdek, 1993) to ascertain whether they serve as possible predictor variables for Non-Initiators' disengagement resistance strategy deployment. Examples of relationship demographic variables used in the current investigation include: length of courtship, number of times married, participant's and spouse's age at the time of divorce,

length of past marriage, presence of children from the former marriage, current marital status, and participant's and spouse's age at the time of marriage.

Although relationship demographic variables have been used as predictors of divorce (e.g., Gottman, 1994a, 1996; Karney & Bradbury, 1995), identifying specific relationship demographic variables that influence disengagement resistance strategy choice will serve to further illuminate communicative behaviors of individuals who do not wish to terminate their relationships. Further, knowing what (if any) relationship demographic variables affect how Non-Initiators resist relationship disengagement allows us to better understand and predict trajectories of the relational termination process.

RQ2: Which relationship demographic variables predict the use of particular Disengagement Resistance Strategies?

CHAPTER 3

Method

This study focuses on communication strategies of divorced partners who did not desire marriage termination. To determine what communicative strategies Non-Initiators use to avoid a breakup, associations among Buss's (1988) mate retention tactics are explored. Relationships among particular tactics serve as the basis for the creation of the Disengagement Resistance Strategies (DRS) index.

Unlike previous disengagement research, the survey instrument for this study was designed to assess participants' actual perceptions of the demise of their marriage. In addition to general demographic data and relationship demographic variables information, participants provided valuable information reflective of real-life marital disengagement experiences as opposed to speculated responses to hypothetical scenarios.

Participants

Participants (n = 270) were recruited using purposive and snowball sampling procedures. Purposive sampling, used to select members of a specialized population "selects cases with specific purposes in mind" (Neuman, 2000, p. 198). Participants selected by purposive sampling procedures are chosen nonrandomly because they possess particular characteristics, i.e., divorced Non-Initiators. Snowball sampling "is a method for identifying and sampling (or selecting) the cases in a network" (Neuman, 2000, p. 199). In the snowball technique, also referred to as a "network sample" (Granovetter, 1976), participants are asked to refer the researcher to other people who qualify and might serve as additional participants in the study.

Of the total 270 participants, 157 were obtained by purposive sampling procedures. These individuals were members of one of four divorce support or divorce recovery groups in the Dallas-Fort Worth area (Appendix F). The remainder of the participants ($n = 113$) was acquired by snowball, or network sampling. Sixty-two participants asked to complete the survey were divorced individuals (not members of the divorce groups) who were friends or acquaintances of divorce group members. Finally, other participants who met the criteria for inclusion in the study ($n = 51$) were identified and contacted by undergraduate communication students at a small, private Southwestern university.

Because the goal of this study is to identify communicative strategies of individuals who have actually been through a marital dissolution, participants had to meet several criteria for inclusion: minimum age of 18, divorced, and identify themselves as the partner least desirous of the marital termination. If a respondent indicated that he or she wanted out of the relationship more than the spouse, then he or she was excluded from the study—as an initiator rather than a Non-Initiator. Based on this requirement, of the 319 surveys collected, 49 were discarded as unusable because respondents reported themselves as the partner more desirous of the marital breakup. Therefore, 270 useable surveys served as data for the current study. Prefacing the five-page survey, Institutional Review Board-approved informed consent forms outlining the objectives of the current study were signed by each participant (Appendix A).

Instrument Design

Participants completed a brief background analysis comprised of demographic information and questions about relationship demographic variables (Appendix B).

Demographic information included questions concerning participants' gender, age, education, and ethnicity.

Demographics

The 270 participants were comprised of 108 males (40%) and 162 females (60%). The average age of respondents was 36, with the youngest age as 18 and the oldest as 65. Median age was 34. Participants reported their highest level of education attained as: high school diploma (N=32; 11.9%); some college (N=92; 34.1%); associate degree (N=34; 12.6%); bachelor's degree (N=65; 24.1%); master's degree (N=36; 13.3%); and Ph.D. (N=8; 3%). Three respondents failed to report their education level.

Ethnic composition of participants included: Caucasian (N=194; 71.97%); African American (N=24; 8.9%); Asian (N=13; 4.8%); Persian (N=3; 1.1%); American Indian (N=12; 4.4%); Hispanic (N=11; 4.1%); Scandinavian (N=2; 0.7%); Italian (N=1; 0.4%); and East Indian (N=2; 0.7%). Eight participants declined to record their ethnic background.

Relationship Demographic Variables

Relationship demographic variables that might affect perceptions of and communication during relational dissolution were also assessed (Appendix B). These include: number of times married, current marital status, length of former marriage, courtship length of former marriage, age when married, age when divorced, spouse's age when married, and spouse's age when divorced. Additionally, participants indicated if the former marriage produced children and whether the former union was a one-career or two-career marriage. The last two questions on the background information page addressed the issue of whether the respondent was the Non-Initiator or not.

In reporting the number of times they have been married, participants indicated: one marriage (N=121; 44.8%); two marriages (N=126; 46.7%); three marriages (N=21; 7.8%), or four marriages (N=2; 0.7%). Respondents reported their current marital status as: married (N=78; 28.9%); separated (N=28; 10.4%); or divorced (N=164; 60.7%). The average length of the previous marriage ranged from six months to 37.25 years, with a mean of 7.7 years and a median of 5.0 years. Courtship length of the former marriage ranged from three months to eight years, with a mean of 2.1 years and a median of 2 years. Participants' ages when they married ranged from 15 to 47, with an average age of 23.8 and a median age of 23. Age of divorce for participants ranged from 18 to 60, with an average age of 31 and a median age of 30. Spouse's age when married ranged from 17 to 47 (mean = 24.7; median = 24) and spouse's age when divorced ranged from 18 to 61 (mean = 32; median = 30).

One hundred fifty six participants reported that their most recent former marriage produced children (58.5%) and 112 participants reported that the former marriage did not produce children (41.5%). Two hundred eleven respondents reported their former marriage as two-career (78.1%), 58 said that theirs was a one-career marriage (21.5%), and one respondent did not report on this item.

The final questions in Appendix B addressed which partner wanted to end the relationship more than the other. First, participants indicated which spouse most wanted the marital breakup by checking one of the following: *my partner wanted out more than I did* or *I wanted out more than my partner*. Second, participants were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale the answer that most closely represented their view: 7 = *I wanted out of the relationship more than my partner*; 4 = *We both wanted out of the relationship*

equally; 1 = *My partner wanted out more than I did*. Surveys in which respondents identified themselves as wanting out of the relationship more than their partner were not used in this study. Participants who answered by circling a 1, 2, or 3 were retained, whereas those who circled a 4, 5, 6, or 7 were eliminated from the study. Of the original 319 surveys collected, 49 were discarded as unusable because respondents reported themselves as the partner more desirous of the marital breakup (15.5%). Consequently, 270 useable surveys served as data for the current study.

Tactic Use

Non-Initiators identified their use of mate retention tactics during the dissolution process. The *Responses to My Partner Who Wanted to End Our Relationship* (Appendix C) instrument was used to assess which mate retention tactics Non-Initiators employ. Buss and Shackelford's (1997) nominal list of mate retention tactics was adapted to measure to what extent each strategy was used. Table 6 provides operational exemplars of each mate retention tactic used in the questionnaire. For each of the 19 items, Non-Initiators completed a 7-point Likert scale assessing how often a retention tactic was used (7 = Always; 6 = Very Often; 5 = Often; 4 = Sometimes; 3 = Seldom; 2 = Very Seldom; 1 = Never). The goal of using Likert-type responses to measure participants' utilization of each tactic was to allow for assessment of dimensionality of the original mate retention taxonomy. The items in the taxonomy yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .82.

Table 6

Operational Exemplars of Mate Retention Tactics

1	APPEARANCE ENHANCEMENT	I tried to make myself more attractive to my spouse.
2	COMMITMENT MANIPULATION	I asked my spouse to commit more fully to our relationship.
3	CONCEALMENT OF MATE	I tried to limit my spouse's contact with other people.
4	DEROGATION OF COMPETITORS	I communicated bad things about someone I thought was competing for my spouse's attention.
5	DEROGATION OF MATE	I called my spouse names and put him/her down.
6	EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION	I tried to make my partner feel guilty.
7	INTRASEXUAL THREATS	I threatened to harm others who might come between me and my spouse.
8	JEALOUSY INDUCTION	I threatened to be unfaithful to my spouse.
9	LOVE AND CARE	I tried to be more helpful to my spouse to show that I cared.
10	MONOPOLIZATION OF TIME	I insisted that my spouse spend his/her free time with me.
11	PHYSICAL POSSESSION SIGNALS	I tried to show others that my partner was taken by holding hands, putting my arm around my spouse.
12	POSSESSIVE ORNAMENTATION	I wore clothes or accessories that belonged to my spouse.
13	PUNISH MATE'S INFIDELITY THREAT	I threatened to break up with my spouse if he/she ever cheated on me.
14	RESOURCE DISPLAY	I gave gifts to my spouse.
15	SEXUAL INDUCEMENT	I tried to make my spouse want me sexually.
16	SUBMISSION AND DEBASEMENT	I told my spouse that I would do anything to save our relationship.
17	VERBAL POSSESSION SIGNALS	In public, I talked to my spouse so that others would know that he/she belonged to me.
18	VIGILANCE	I checked on my spouse to find out where he/she was or whom he/she was with.
19	VIOLENCE AGAINST RIVALS	I physically fought with or vandalized property of someone I thought was interested in my spouse.

Procedures

Research question one. To assess dimensionality of Buss and Shackelford's (1997) mate retention tactics, a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted to answer RQ1: What are the factor analytic dimensions of Buss' (1988) mate retention taxonomy? A scree plot was used to select a parsimonious number of factors. Four factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than one, accounting for a total of 66.5% of the variance. Factor loadings are reported in Table 8. Items that correlated higher than .60 with a factor, and not more than .40 with any other factor, were considered to be associated with that factor. Of the 19 mate retention tactics, 14 met this criterion and were retained in the final rotated factor solution. Four factors were found: Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm.

Research question two. To answer RQ2: Which relationship demographic variables predict the use of specific disengagement resistance strategies?, a stepwise multiple regression was performed with the relationship demographic variables as predictor variables: length of courtship, number of times married, participant age at the time of divorce, spouse age at the time of divorce, length of past marriage, spouse's age at the time of marriage, the participant's age at the time of marriage, current marital status, careers, and children from the marriage. Criterion variables were the four disengagement resistance strategies: Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm. Analysis was performed using SPSS regression.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Research Question One

In order to answer the first research question, (RQ1: What are the factor analytic dimensions of Buss' (1988) mate retention taxonomy?), an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. The goal of this procedure was to assess the dimensionality of the Buss (1988) mate retention taxonomy by summarizing the 19 tactics into a smaller number of higher order strategies (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Initial correlations among the 19 tactics are provided in Table 7.

A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 19 items from the original mate retention taxonomy. Four factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than one, accounting for a total of 66.5% of the variance. Items that correlated higher than .60 with one factor, and not more than .40 with any other factor, were considered to be associated with their primary factor. Of the 19 mate retention tactics, 14 met this criterion and were retained in the final rotated factor solution. All factors were internally consistent and well defined by the variables. Factor loadings are presented in Table 8.

The first factor accounted for 20.8% of the variance and included five tactics: mate derogation, vigilance, jealousy induction, monopolization of time, and emotional manipulation (composite $M = 15.83$, $SD = 7.4$, $\alpha = .85$). These five items were interpreted to represent *Negativity* as a higher order strategy in the mate retention taxonomy. The second factor, which accounted for 15.9% of the variance, was comprised of four items: verbal possession signals, physical possession signals, punish mate's

infidelity threat, and sexual inducement ($M = 16.5$, $SD = 5.9$, $\alpha = .78$). This factor was labeled *Alignment* to represent attempts by the Non-Initiator to be perceived as a bonded couple--not only by the initiator, but also by others. The third factor, accounting for 13.3% of the variance, was defined by three items: commitment manipulation, submission and debasement, and love and care ($M = 14.2$, $SD = 3.9$, $\alpha = .73$). This factor represented *Commitment* as a higher order disengagement resistance strategy. The fourth factor, which included the two items of violence against rivals and intrasexual threats, accounted for 10.0% of the variance ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 2.1$, $\alpha = .62$). This final factor was interpreted to represent *Harm* as a disengagement resistance strategy. The five tactics that did not load on a factor were: appearance enhancement, mate concealment, derogation of competitors, possessive ornamentation, and resource display.

The LIMSTAT program was used to subject all four factor indices to confirmatory factor analysis to ensure internal consistency and parallelism. There were no significant differences within the scales. All items were retained due to the flatness of the matrices and insubstantial errors.

Table 7

Correlations Among the Tactics

Tactic	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Commitment Manipulation	1.00						
2. Derogation of Mate	.21**	1.00					
3. Rival Violence	.18**	.33**	1.00				
4. Spousal Vigilance	.29**	.48**	.39**	1.00			
5. Jealousy Induction	.08	.52**	.26**	.47**	1.00		
6. Intrasexual Threats	.10	.21**	.46**	.23**	.26**	1.00	
7. Love and Care	.50**	.08	.07	.29**	.11	.00	1.00
8. Concealment of Mate	.29**	.47**	.31**	.61**	.60**	.29**	.24**
9. Emotional Manipulation	.37**	.64**	.28**	.50**	.50**	.13*	.23**
10. Submission/Debasement	.52**	.13*	.20**	.25**	.12*	.11	.43**
11. Verbal Possession	.28**	.34**	.23**	.41**	.47**	.22**	.30**
12. Sexual Inducement	.26**	.29**	.12	.39**	.36**	.13*	.44**
13. Possession Signals	.27**	.31**	.28**	.39**	.32**	.33**	.25**
14. Infidelity Threat	.28	.27**	.24**	.43**	.25**	.30**	.16**
15. More Attractive	.24**	.11	.27**	.24**	.23**	.28**	.19**
16. Ctd Bad Things	.15*	.46**	.29**	.61**	.42**	.20**	.11
17. Insist on Free Time	.47**	.33**	.17**	.46**	.46**	.22**	.38**
18. Wore Spouse's Clothes	.17**	.29**	.16*	.43**	.61**	.16**	.23**
19. Gave Gifts	.31**	.23**	.06	.30**	.42**	.17**	.45**

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 7

Correlations Among the Tactics (continued)

Tactic	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
8. Concealment of Mate	1.00						
9. Emotional Manipulation	.54**	1.00					
10. Submission/Debasement	.30**	.28**	1.00				
11. Verbal Possession	.45**	.30**	.31**	1.00			
12. Sexual Inducement	.39**	.33**	.36**	.53**	1.00		
13. Possession Signals	.46**	.34**	.33**	.62**	.49**	1.00	
14. Infidelity Threat	.30**	.18**	.09	.37**	.33**	.41**	1.00
15. More Attractive	.24**	.20**	.21**	.22**	.24**	.17*	.13*
16. Ctd Bad Things	.53**	.54**	.12	.34**	.32**	.40**	.36**
17. Insist on Free Time	.56**	.46**	.30**	.48**	.43**	.45**	.29**
18. Wore Spouse's Clothes	.45**	.37**	.26**	.46**	.40**	.39**	.26**
19. Gave Gifts	.36**	.30**	.32**	.48**	.45**	.38**	.24**

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 7

Correlations Among the Tactics (continued)

Tactic	15	16	17	18	19
15. More Attractive	1.00				
16. Ctd Bad Things	.19**	1.00			
17. Insist on Free Time	.19**	.40**	1.00		
18. Wore Spouse's Clothes	.26**	.39**	.46**	1.00	
19. Gave Gifts	.17**	.24**	.45**	.26**	1.00

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 8

Rotated Factor Loadings of Mate Retention Tactics

	I	II	III	IV
	(Negativity)	(Alignment)	(Commitment)	(Harm)
Emotional Manipulation	.82	.01	.28	.01
Derogation of Mate	.81	.11	.01	.16
Jealousy Induction	.73	.35	-.01	.01
Concealment of Mate	.66	.36	.18	.18
Spousal Vigilance	.60	.36	.21	.24
Verbal Possession	.30	.73	.20	.01
Physical Possession	.20	.70	.22	.24
Sexual Inducement	.25	.69	.33	-.13
Infidelity Threat	.12	.66	-.01	.30
Commitment Manipulation	.19	.01	.83	.11
Submission/Debasement	.01	.15	.77	.14
Love and Care	.01	.31	.73	-.14
Rival Violence	.01	.23	-.01	.81
Intrasexual Threats	.26	.01	.14	.79

Research Question Two

To address the second research question (RQ2: Which relationship demographic variables predict the use of specific disengagement resistance strategies?), a stepwise multiple regression was performed with the relationship demographic variables as predictor variables: length of courtship, number of times married, participant age at the time of divorce, spouse age at the time of divorce, length of past marriage, spouse's age at the time of marriage, the participant's age at the time of marriage, current marital status, careers, and children from the marriage. Criterion variables were the four disengagement resistance strategies: Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm. Analysis was performed using SPSS regression.

Because three of the 10 predictor variables were discrete variables (current marital status, careers, and children from the marriage), these items were dummy coded (0 = not married, one career family, no children; 1 = married, two career family, children). These variables were included in the regression equation in an effort to provide the best test of each of the four models concerning disengagement resistance strategies. These models will be discussed in turn.

Sex differences in strategy use were also assessed in an attempt to replicate Buss's (1988) findings on sex differences and tactic use. Analysis of variance tests were performed to explore significant differences between male and female use of the four disengagement resistance strategies. Tables 9 and 10 provide means and standard deviations for the continuous demographic variables and frequencies for the discrete demographic variables, separated by sex.

The means and standard deviations were relatively similar for males and females on the relationship demographic variables of number of times married, length of courtship, and participant's age at the time of divorce. However, on the average, females had longer lengths of former marriages, their spouses age at marriage was older, and their former spouses were older at the time of divorce whereas males were older at the time of marriage. Results of a chi-square test were not significant.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Continuous Demographic Relationship Variables

Relationship Demographic Variable	Mean		Standard Deviation	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Number of times married	1.69	1.58	.682	.613
*Length of (most recent) former marriage F(1,268) = 5.347	<u>8.57</u>	6.48	7.86	6.30
Length of courtship	2.04	2.21	1.51	1.27
**Age at marriage (participant) F(1,268) = 10.257	23.08	<u>24.92</u>	4.57	4.69
Age at divorce (participant)	31.63	31.23	8.29	7.74
**Spouse's age at marriage F(1,267) = 9.680	<u>25.47</u>	23.59	5.28	4.14
**Spouse's age at divorce F(1,267) = 17.71	<u>34.09</u>	29.90	8.38	7.39

Note. *p < .02; **p < .00

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Discrete Demographic Relationship Variables

Relationship Demographic Variable	Females		Males	
	0	1	0	1
Current marital status (0 = not married; 1 = married)	115 (71.0%)	47 (29.0%)	77 (71.3%)	31 (28.7%)
Presence of children (0 = no children; 1 = children)	62 (38.3%)	100 (61.7%)	50 (46.3%)	58 (53.7%)
Career (0 = one career; 1 = two career)	34 (21.0%)	128 (79.0%)	25 (23.1%)	83 (76.9%)

Negativity

Table 11 displays the correlations between the variables, the standardized regression coefficients (β), and R^2 ($F(1, 264) = 6.463, p < .05$) for Negativity as a disengagement resistance strategy. The only predictor variable that contributed significantly to prediction of Negativity was the presence of children in the former marriage. Individuals who had children during their former marriage indicated an increased use of the Negativity strategy as opposed to those individuals who did not have children. Two percent of the variability in Negativity was predicted by whether or not the former marriage produced children.

Sex differences in use of Negativity as a disengagement resistance strategy were assessed by a one-way ANOVA. The results of this test revealed that women ($M = 16.6$;

$SD = 7.6$) used the Negativity strategy significantly more often than did men ($M = 14.6$; $SD = 7.08$), $F(1, 268) = 4.933, p < .05$.

Table 11

Summary of a Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Negativity as a Disengagement Resistance Strategy

Variable	<i>B</i>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Presence of Children	2.35	.92	.16**

Note. $R^2 = .02$ ($p < .01$). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Alignment

Table 12 presents the correlations between the variables, the standardized regression coefficients (β), and R^2 ($F(1, 258) = 5.496, p < .05$) for Alignment as a disengagement resistance strategy. Two predictor variables contributed significantly to the prediction of Alignment: the participant's age at divorce and presence of children in the former marriage. These variables contributed to four percent of the variance in use of Alignment as a disengagement resistance strategy. Participants who were younger at the time of divorce and the presence of children in the former marriage tended to use the

Alignment strategy more often than those who were older when they divorced and those who did not have children from a previous marriage.

As far as sex differences in use of the Alignment strategy, a one-way ANOVA revealed that women ($M = 16.1$; $SD = 6.07$) did not use the Alignment strategy more often than did men ($M = 17.1$; $SD = 6.8$), $F(1, 263) = 1.831$, $p > .05$.

Table 12

Summary of a Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Alignment as a Disengagement Resistance Strategy

Variable	<i>B</i>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Model 1			
Age at Divorce	-.11	.05	-.14*
Model 2			
Age at Divorce	-.14	.05	-.19**
Presence of Children	1.63	.78	.14*

Note. Model 1: $\underline{R}^2 = .02$; adj. $\underline{R}^2 = .02$ ($p < .02$). Model 2: $\underline{R}^2 = .04$; adj. $\underline{R}^2 = .03$ ($p < .00$). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Commitment

Table 13 displays the correlations between the variables, the standardized regression coefficients (β), and R^2 . R was significantly different from zero for the

Commitment strategy, $F(1, 262) = 5.008, p < .05$. Only one of the predictor variables contributed significantly to prediction of Commitment as a disengagement resistance strategy: the participant's age at the time of marriage. Two percent of the variability was predicted by the participant's age at the time of marriage. Those who were younger when they married were more likely to use the Commitment strategy to resist relationship termination. No significant difference was found between males and females on the use of the Commitment strategy: women ($M = 14.5; SD = 4.08$); men ($M = 13.7; SD = 3.8$), $F(1, 266) = 3.232, p > .05$.

Table 13

Summary of a Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Commitment as a Disengagement Resistance Strategy

Variable	<i>B</i>	<u>SE B</u>	β
Age at Marriage	-.12	.05	-.14*

Note. $R^2 = .02$ ($p < .03$). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

Harm

No relational variables were able to predict the use of the Harm strategy. In addition, there was no significant difference between males and females on the use of the

Harm strategy: women ($M = 3.2$; $SD = 1.89$); men ($M = 3.6$; $SD = 2.35$), $F(1, 268) = 2.239, p > .05$.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

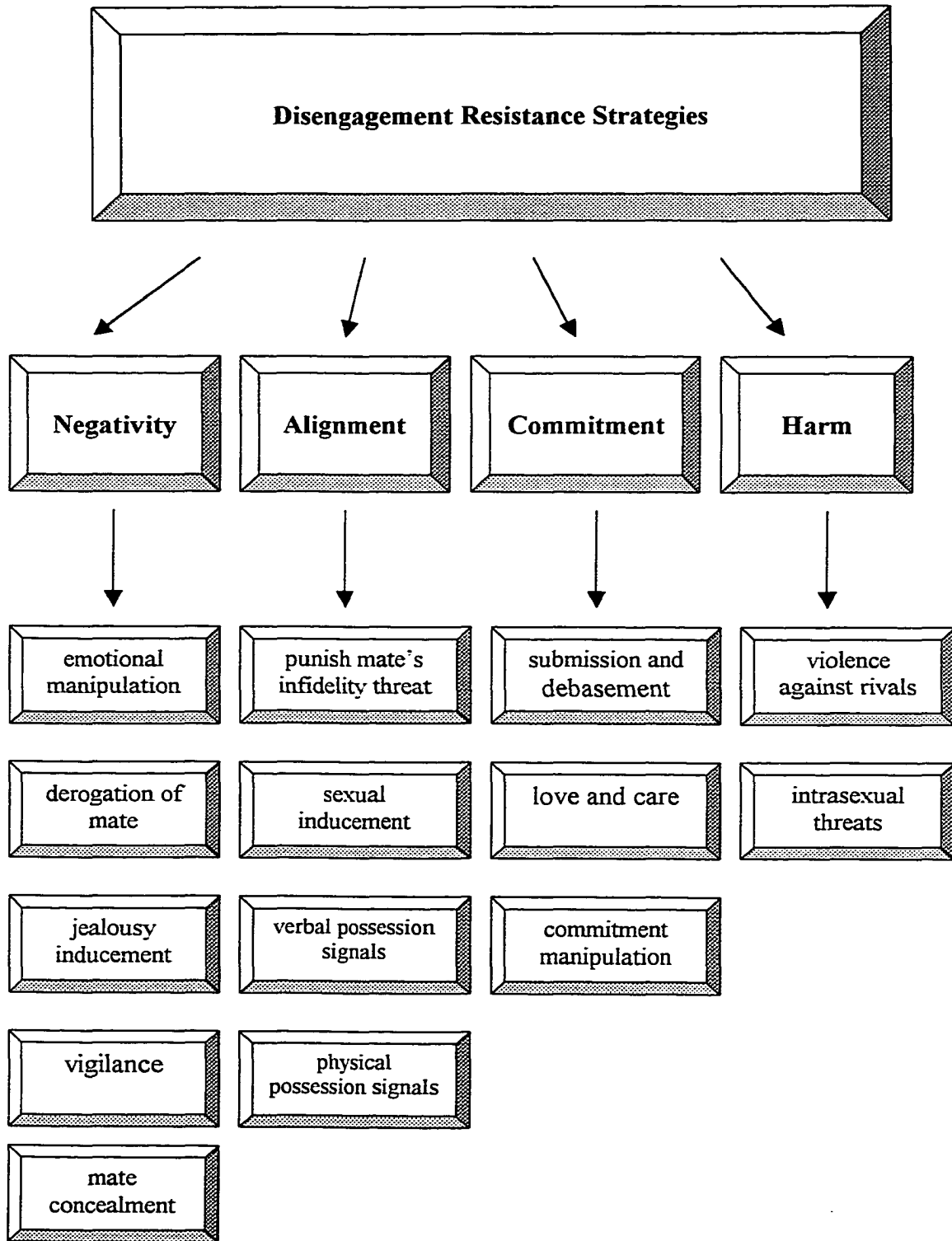
Findings

The goal of this study is to examine mate retention tactics as indications of overall disengagement strategies Non-Initiators use to retain their spouse. Buss's (1988) taxonomy of retention tactics is used to explore communication strategies of Non-Initiators during relational dissolution. This study reveals that Buss's taxonomy is not a unidimensional menu of tactics used by Non-Initiators. In fact, four overall strategies emerge as salient communication approaches to resist the marital breakup: *Negativity*, *Alignment*, *Commitment*, and *Harm* (Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows the relationship of tactics to overarching disengagement resistance strategies. Whereas strategies are planned and goal-oriented, tactics are acts that tend to (generally) be more unplanned in nature. Therefore, from a strategic communication perspective, revealing Non-Initiators' overall use of DRS is imperative. Moving away from individual incidents toward behavioral patterns allows for the exploration of communicative themes of resistance to relationship disengagement.

Figure 1

Disengagement Resistance Strategies and their Tactics



Negativity

The first strategy, *Negativity*, is made up of five tactics including: emotional manipulation, derogation of mate, jealousy inducement, vigilance, and concealment of mate. Non-Initiators' use of this strategy centers on attempts to create dissonance in the mind of a partner about the impending breakup. The Negativity strategy includes tactics that are a result of relational inequity. That is, when one partner perceives himself or herself to be the under-benefited partner, the result is an attempt to level the playing field by heightening positive attributes of the resistor or accentuating negative characteristics of the mate. As Canary et al. (2000) note: "People who are not in an equitable, fair relationship will break up eventually" (p. 269).

Emotional manipulation is an attempt to make a partner feel guilty about the state of the relationship. Buss (1988) gives examples of this tactic including acts such as crying, pleading, begging, and pretending to be angry or upset (Buss, 1988). Dramatic outbursts directed toward the spouse are typical expressions of emotional manipulation.

Similarly, derogation of a mate is the use of verbally abusive language to highlight perceived negative attributes of the initiator. Examples of this tactic include berating, calling names, and stating that an initiator is socially undesirable.

Jealousy inducements are attempts to make an initiator suspicious of potential mate alternatives of the resistor. Flirting with others, spending time with the opposite sex, and threatening infidelity all characterize this tactical approach (Buss, 1988). How jealousy is communicated influences the degree of relational satisfaction (Andersen, Eloy, Guerrero, & Spitzberg, 1995). For example, in a study identifying motivations for

causing intentional jealousy, women who believe that they are the more involved partner are much more likely to try to make their mate jealous (White, 1980).

Vigilance behaviors are types of “spying” on a mate. For instance, a spouse might call the partner at unexpected times to see who he or she was with, call to make sure the spouse is where she said that she would be, questioning the spouse about what he or she did when they were apart, or dropping by unexpectedly to see what the spouse was doing.

Mate concealment tactics are behaviors by one partner to withhold the mate from other people, i.e., potential future companions. These tactics include not taking the spouse to public events where competitors might be present, refusing to introduce the spouse to friends of the opposite sex, and not allowing the spouse to talk to prospective competitors.

The use of the Negativity strategy is predicted by one relationship demographic variable: presence of children in the marriage (Figure 2). In addition, there was a significant difference in use of tactics associated with negativity based on gender. Generally, women tend to initiate marital separation and suggest divorce more often than men (Baiaomonte, 1999; Bloom & Hodges, 1981; Spanier & Thompson, 1984). This study suggests women also use the Negativity strategy more often than men when resisting a breakup. Thus, when women perceive their marriage is failing, they may initiate more communicative interventions than their male partners. Similarly, Vangelisti and Huston (1994) found that one predictor of change in a wife’s love for her husband included evaluation of marital communication effectiveness.

Younger partners, those with shorter courtship periods, and shorter marriages are associated with the use of the Negativity strategy. These data are consistent with Buss

and Shackelford's (1997) findings that suggest negative relationships between the partners' ages, the length of their relationship, and the use of all tactics included in the Negativity strategy.

Interestingly, Negativity as a strategy is comprised of the greatest number of tactics that Non-Initiators use. This could be due to perceived lack of stigma associated with these behaviors in comparison to more stigmatized strategies such as the Harm strategy. In addition, all tactics included in the Negativity approach are directed toward the partner; thus, implying a situational isolation to their enactment. In this respect, Non-Initiators' use of this strategy exemplifies attempts to frame relational problems in terms of their partners' faults, as opposed to any personal deficiencies. Figure 3 lists the tactics within the Negativity strategy and illustrates how all the acts are directed toward the spouse. The five tactics used against the spouse in the Negativity strategy include emotional manipulation, derogation of mate, jealousy inducement, vigilance, and mate concealment. None of these components are directed toward anyone other than the spouse.

Finally, a significant relational factor leading to increased use of the Negativity strategy was length of a past marriage. Implicit in this finding is the fact that Non-Initiators previously experienced a failed marital relationship. The vast majority of men and women around the world will marry at least once in their lifetimes (Brown, 1991; Epstein & Guttman, 1984). However, no culture is exempt from marital strife and dissolution. Whether formal or informal, divorce is a cross-culturally communal phenomenon (Betzig, 1989). In the Western world, less than one in two marriages lasts a lifetime--in fact, the majority of marriages end within the first four years of marriage

(Fisher, 1995) and over one-half of all first marriages end in separation or divorce (Castro Martin & Bumpass, 1989). The ubiquity of divorce in the United States is exemplified by the fact that 1,163,000 Americans divorce annually (National Center for Health Statistics, 1997). These numbers include multiple marriages by one party. It is logical then to surmise that a history of divorce plays an important part in the overall communicative condition of dissolution. Negativity may be a direct function of not only the condition of a current relationship, but also recollections and experiences from relationships past.

Figure 2

Relationship Demographic Variables Predicting Use of the Negativity Strategy

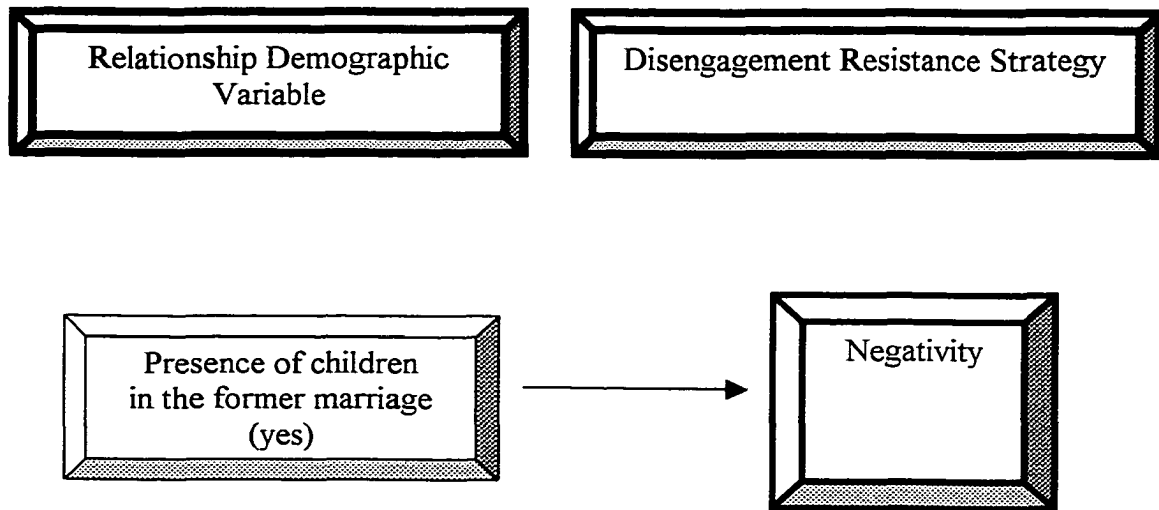
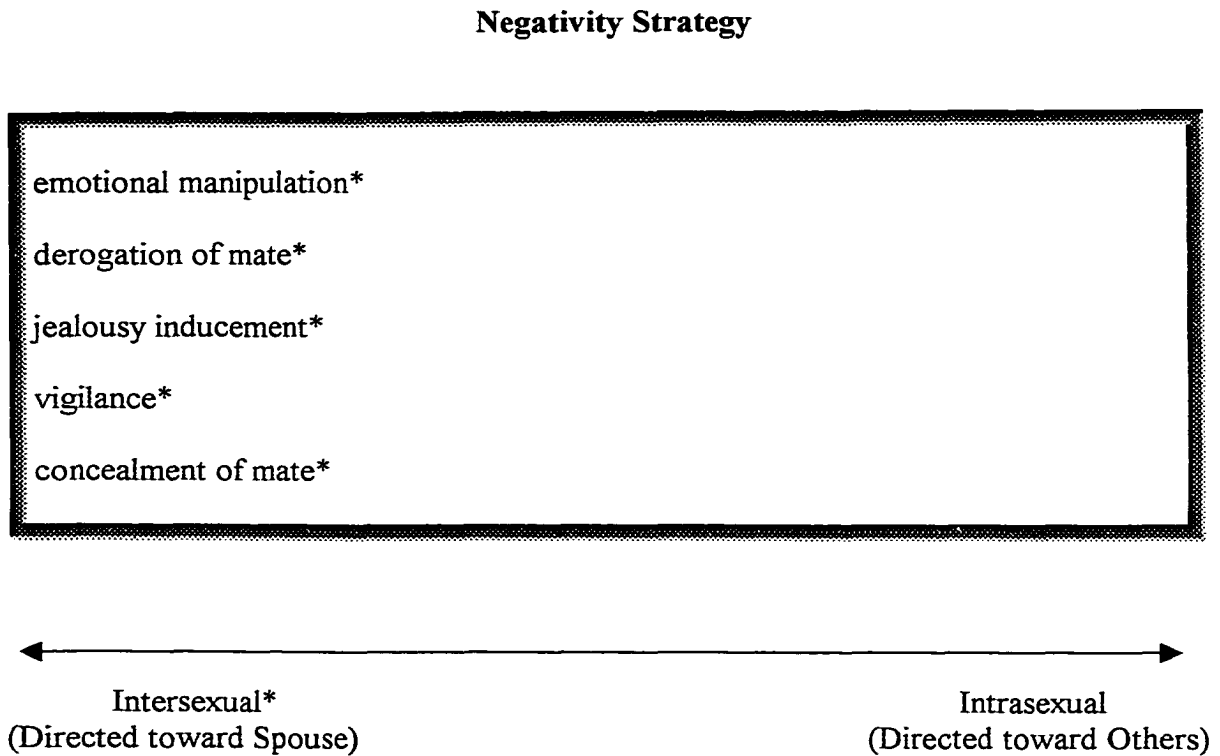


Figure 3

Tactics within the Negativity StrategyAlignment

The second strategy, *Alignment*, is comprised of four tactical communicative responses: verbal possession signals, physical possession signals, punishment of a mate's infidelity threat, and sexual inducement. Alignment is an attempt by the Non-Initiator to be perceived as a bonded couple--not only by the initiator, but also by others.

Verbal possession signals include linguistic cues explicitly stating that the relational partner is the spouse (as opposed to a friend or acquaintance), bragging about a partner, or mentioning to others that you are "taken" (Buss, 1988). This communicative

approach to association is intended to remind the partner, and potential rivals, that the relationship is still intact. Verbal signals of possession are public indications that the spouse “belongs” to the mate. These include: introducing the mate as the spouse, telling others how much in love the couple is, and relating to outsiders intimate things the couple had done together.

Physical possession signals are nonverbal communication behaviors aimed at demonstrating to others that the spouse is unavailable. These consist of: hand-holding, kissing in public, putting an arm around the mate, and sitting next to the spouse when others are near.

Punishment of a mate’s infidelity threat is negative communication directed toward the mate. These behaviors are comprised of: becoming angry when a mate flirts with another, ignoring the mate who flirts, threatening to end the relationship if the partner cheats, yelling if the partner showed an interest in another, and becoming jealous when the partner goes out without the mate.

Sexual inducements are generally considered to be positive behaviors of enticement. For example, giving in to the mate’s sexual requests, acting sexy, and performing sexual favors entail sexual inducements.

Together, these four tactical communicative responses that structure Alignment (verbal and physical possession signals, punishment of a mate’s infidelity threat, and sexual inducement) form a strategy because they signal unity and cohesion between the couple. Non-Initiators’ use of Alignment as a strategy indicates both to the partner and to outsiders that the couple is an interconnected unit.

Alignment was predicted as a communicative resistance strategy based on the relationship demographic variables corresponding to the participant's age at the time of divorce and presence of children in the former marriage (Figure 4). These data reveal that the younger one of the partners is at the time of divorce and if the former marriage produced children, the more likely they were to use the Alignment strategy.

Behaviors illustrating to outsiders the alliance of the couple and behaviors directed toward the spouse that encourage solidarity are plausible communicative messages that younger Non-Initiators might send. The maturation level of the Non-Initiator influences use of Alignment as a strategy to resist disengagement. More youthful partners tended to employ Alignment and this is possibly due to fewer life experiences. Additionally, Non-Initiators that have children from the previous marriage are conceivably more likely to use the Alignment strategy because children are a tangible symbol of greater investment in a relationship.

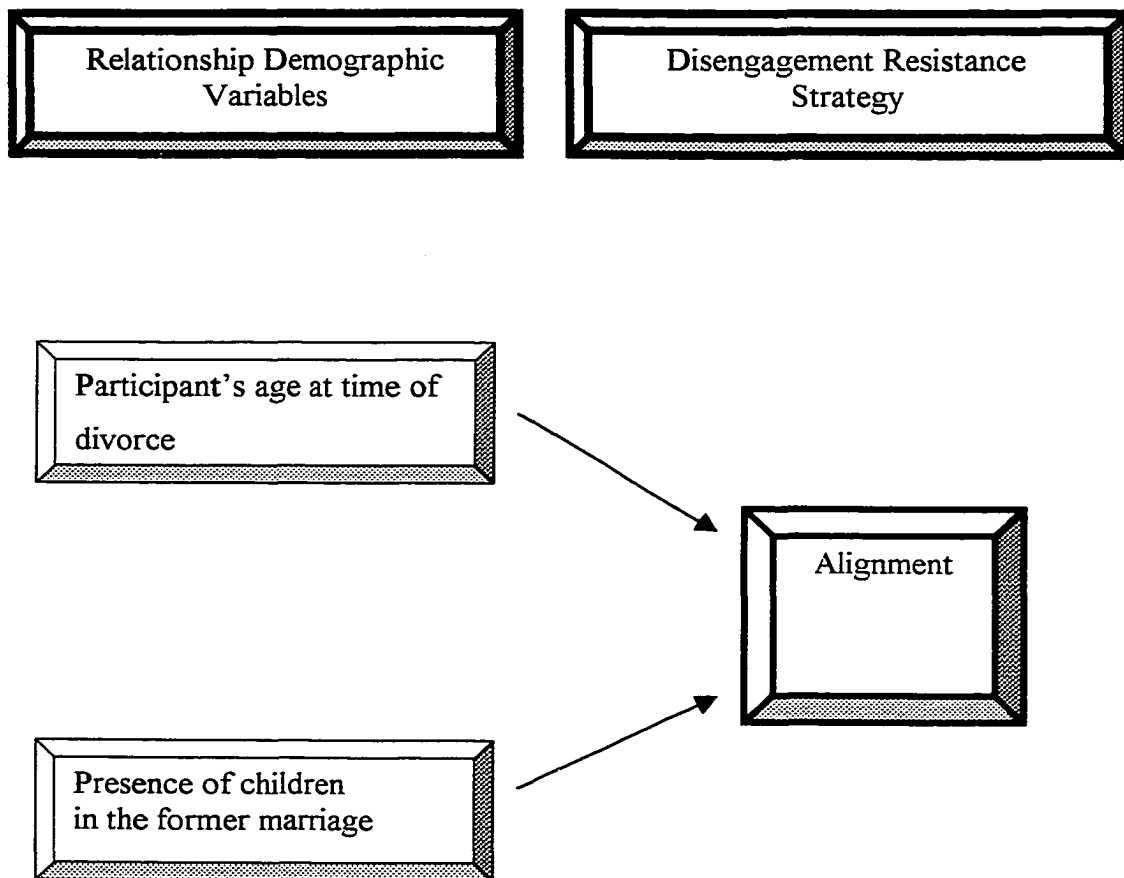
The Alignment strategy is comprised of both partner-centered and third party-centered tactics (Figure 5). Verbal and physical possession signals are directed toward potential rivals, while spouse centered alignment moves are comprised of punishing a mate's infidelity threats and sexual inducement. Possession signals are Non-initiators attempts at impression management. That is, they serve as a conscious attempt to improve or monitor one's public image (Leathers, 1996).

It should be noted that all of these tactics also occur in relationships that are not unraveling. In the course of a healthy relationship, it is not unusual for partners to exhibit these behaviors. However, when viewed through the lens of a dissolving relationship, these tactics represent attempts to solidify an otherwise tenuous union. They serve as

reminders to the potentially straying spouse, and are cues to others who might threaten the relationship.

Figure 4

Relationship Demographic Variables Predicting Use of the Alignment Strategy



Initiator, and all three tactics are directed toward the spouse (Figure 6). Whereas two of the tactics, giving love and care and commitment manipulation, are displayed in a positive manner, submission and debasement is an unhealthy response. As a disconfirming message, submission and debasement conveys a negative evaluation of the spouse and the marital relationship (Sieburg, 1976). Possible consequences of this approach include increased resentment by the Non-Initiator. Lerner (1997) contends that “...the woman who sits at the bottom of a seesaw marriage accumulates a great amount of rage, which is in direct proportion to the degree of her submission and sacrifice” (pp. 32-33).

When interpreting disengagement resistance strategies as either positive or negative, the motivation of the communicator should be taken into account. Because a power differential exists between divorcing marital partners, the role of motivation must be acknowledged when evaluating such behaviors. Motivation is regarded as a person’s orientation to approach or avoid particular social situations (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; 1989). However, an individual’s motivation behind strategy selection or whether to engage in or retreat from a conflict has the potential to “redefine the relationship in ways that neither partner originally intended” (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000, p. 422). Because the spouse’s behavior is filtered through the Non-Initiator’s needs and expectations, motivations behind particular DRS may be complex, obscure, and difficult to understand.

The Commitment strategy exemplifies helping behaviors, exhibiting affection, and expressing a need for the partner to commit fully to the relationship. Non-Initiators who employ the Commitment strategy exert the extra effort to gain reciprocity from their spouses. Cialdini (2000) posits that an individual is more willing to comply with requests

from another if the other has created a feeling of obligation. The Commitment strategy is a strategic communication technique used (understandably) by the less powerful partner in a relationship. Because Non-Initiators are the partners undesirous of the breakup, they are at a disadvantage. Consequently, they most likely must increase their spouses' perceived rewards and sense of duty to remain in the relationship. A significant predictor of use of the Commitment strategy was the participant's age at the time of marriage (Figure 7). One possible explanation for this might be that the Commitment strategy is comprised of three tactics directed toward the spouse. More than older participants, younger partners may feel that they must "show" the spouse their commitment through love and care, submission and debasement, and commitment manipulation.

Figure 6

Tactics within the Commitment Strategy

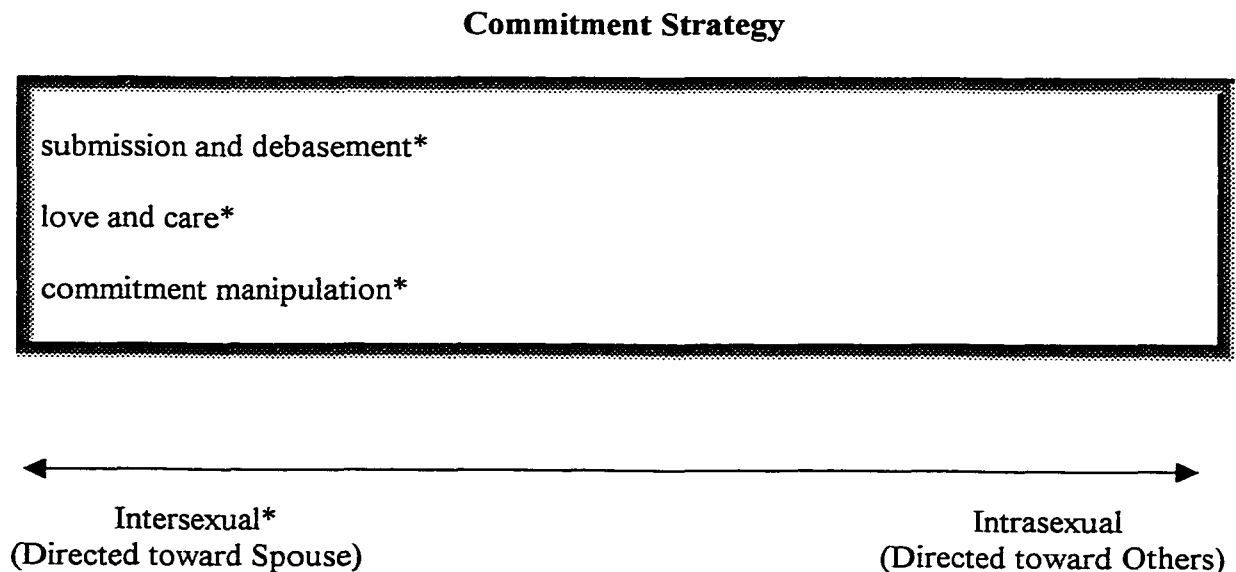
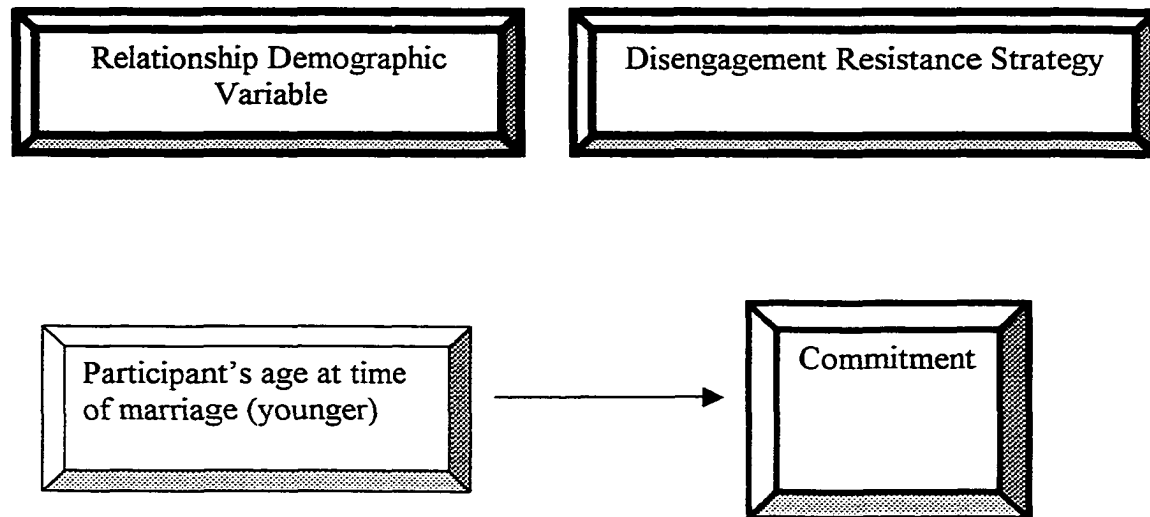


Figure 7

Relationship Demographic Variables Predicting Use of the Commitment StrategyHarm

Harm is comprised of violence against rivals and intrasexual threats. Violence against rivals refers to acts such as fighting or vandalizing the property of individuals perceived as a threat to the relationship. Intrasexual threats include yelling, staring, threatening, and verbally confronting rivals. This form of verbal aggressiveness is aimed at deterring potential future partners competing for the spouse's attention. In the Harm strategy, both violence against rivals and intrasexual threats are directed toward a third party, e.g., individuals perceived as potential contenders or those who might challenge the romantic relationship (Figure 8).

As Miller (1997) astutely notes, "people may respond to the specter of disappointment and decay with behavior that is noticeably less appealing" (p. 21). In this case, the "less appealing behavior" of the Harm strategy is comprised of socially

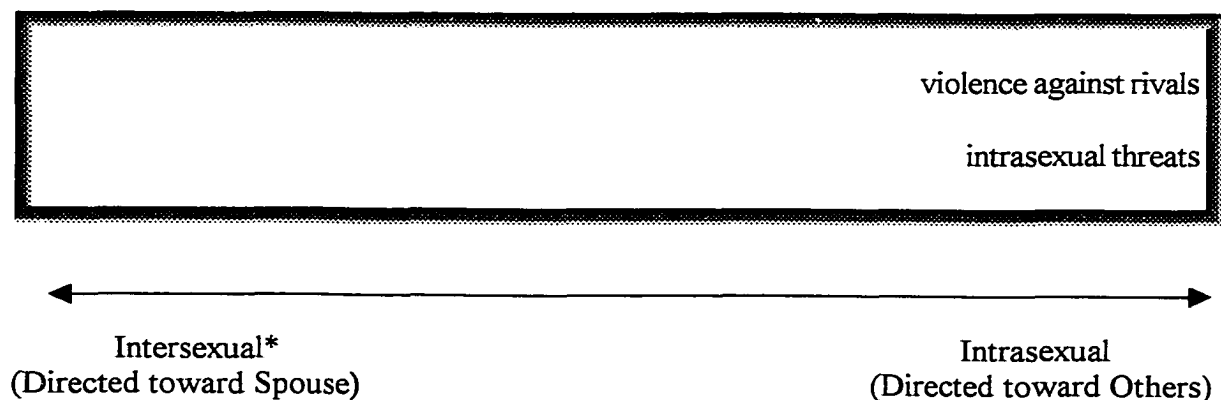
unacceptable acts that serve no constructive purpose for relationship enhancement. Non-Initiators using the Harm strategy construct antisocial, punishment-oriented messages. In a study about post-breakup distress, Sprecher, Felmlee, Metts, Fehr, and Vanni (1998) note that “the person who initiates the breakup is less distressed than the person who is left, at least at the time of the breakup” (p. 794). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Non-Initiators, distressed about the impending marital breakup, might resort to inappropriate and offensive behaviors such as those in the Harm strategy.

Textor (1989) observes: “In many cases the other spouse makes desperate attempts to win back the partner’s affection: however, only a few would go to almost any length to save their marriage” (p. 8). The Harm strategy is an extreme retaliation or power exertion technique used by the under-benefited party in a dissolving relationship. As such, it is not a strategy that participants often admitted to using. Therefore, there was no significant relationship between relationship demographic variables and use of the Harm strategy.

Figure 8

Tactics within the Harm Strategy

Harm Strategy



Disengagement Resistance Strategies As Strategic Communication

The term “strategic” refers to all goal-relevant communication (Berger, 1997). Kellermann (1992) advocates that communication “is selected, structured, and patterned; it is not random, unrestrained, and lawless; it is voluntary, controllable, directional, chosen, and purposeful” (p. 292). Clearly, some cases of communicative exchanges are noticeably not goal-oriented (Langer, 1989). For example, when people carry out routine interactions or behave without any lucid goal in mind, their actions do not appear to be strategic. However, Kellermann (1992) contends that strategic behavior is often used implicitly because people do not always consciously process their goals. DRS used by Non-Initiators are strategic in nature. Moreover, the four DRS identified in the study are explicit communicative behaviors used to resist relational termination.

Results from the current study reveal four types of DRS used by individuals resisting the breakup of their marriages. The four DRS arising from the current study are strategic in nature. These strategies comprise communicative behaviors that directly or indirectly express dissatisfaction with the spouse or the relationship and are an integral part of the relational dissolution process. The strategies discerned in this study (Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm) are goal-seeking behaviors used by Non-Initiators. Each strategy has a social purpose and is guided by the general objective to resist marital breakup. Further, each strategy is emotionally based. Apathetic partners, indifferent about continuing a relationship, are more likely to express neutrality. However, partners concerned about remaining as a couple will utilize negative, aligning, commitment, or harmful behaviors in order to sustain their marriage.

Figure 9 provides a visual overview of the strategies used by Non-Initiators to resist disengagement identified in this study. This diagram lists which tactics fall within each of the four DRS and indicates whether they are intersexual (directed toward the spouse) or intrasexual (directed toward others) in nature. In a graphic illustration, Figure 10 presents a grid that plots each DRS and the intra- or intersexual feature of the strategy. Additionally, this image denotes whether the strategy is considered a positive (constructive) or a negative (destructive) behavior to the relationship. Whereas the Negativity and Harm strategies both comprise destructive relational behavior, the Commitment and Alignment strategies include both constructive and destructive behaviors on the part of Non-Initiators. In relation to whom the strategies are directed, the Negativity and Commitment strategies are directed solely toward the spouse, the Harm strategy is directed only toward potential competitors, and Alignment strategy is directed toward both the spouse and others.

Together, these two figures represent the findings of the current study and display the four Disengagement Resistance Strategies (Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm); whether each strategy is directed toward the spouse, others, or a combination of both; and whether each strategy is considered as beneficial or damaging to the relationship. It is interesting to observe that the both the Negativity and Commitment strategies are comprised of tactics that are directed exclusively toward the spouse (intersexual). Conversely, Non-Initiators who use the Harm strategy solely target others (intrasexual), but not the spouse. As a combination of both inter- and intrasexual tactics, the Alignment strategy is the only one of the four DRS aimed at both the spouse and others. Non-initiators resisting a marital failure strategically communicate to their

spouses and to others outside the relationship their desire to be and be perceived as an intact couple.

Although spouses' intentions and motivations for ending a marriage vary, they are not always lucid or readily identifiable. While the term Non-Initiator tends to imply the partner who did not initiate the divorce, the possibility exists that the spouse who truly did not want the relationship to end might be compelled or coerced by the other to enact breakup behaviors. One motive perhaps influencing the current study may stem from "aversive stimulation" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967). The compliance-gaining technique of aversive stimulation is a "punishing activity" involving explicit negative manipulation of the target's environment and occurs when an "actor continuously punishes target making cessation contingent on compliance" (Marwell & Schmitt, 1967, p. 357). In other words, one spouse may manipulate the other into breaking up the marriage. Aversive stimulation is a strategic communication behavior that is veiled and implicit in nature. Therefore, aversive stimulation may prove difficult to detect—even for intimate relational partners.

When interpreting disengagement resistance strategies as either positive or negative, both motivation of the communicators and interpretation by the partners should be taken into account. Because a power differential exists between divorcing marital partners, the role of motivation must be acknowledged when evaluating such behaviors. Motivation is regarded as a person's orientation to approach or avoid particular social situations (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984; 1989). However, an individual's motivation behind strategy selection or whether to engage in or retreat from a conflict has the potential to "redefine the relationship in ways that neither partner originally intended" (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000, p. 422). Because the spouse's behavior is filtered through the

Non-Initiator's needs and expectations, motivations behind particular DRS may be complex, obscure, and difficult to understand.

Interpreting the four DRS as either positive or negative is a relatively subjective procedure. Although the four strategies differentiated in the current study used by Non-Initiators to resist a marital breakup (Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm) are clearly labeled, the terms may not unequivocally express a particular strategy's interpretation by the relational partners. For example, a Non-Initiator might identify himself or herself as using the Alignment strategy. Although Alignment is characterized as a somewhat "positive" strategy in this study, the partner(s) might deem the use of Alignment as solely negative communicative behaviors. Whereas the four DRS are depicted as generally positive or negative behaviors, interpretation of strategies as positive or negative (or a combination of both) resides in the minds of the relational partners. Therefore, the interpretation of the positive or negative nature of DRS is connotative and exists in the relational partners' reality. The valence of DRS can only be accurately interpreted by the communicators themselves.

DRS and Disengagement Phases

Three extant models of relationship disengagement (Duck, 1984; Knapp & Vangelisti, 2000; Lee, 1984) were earlier collapsed into one that encompasses Distress, Delimitation, Disintegration, Determination, and Disunion (see Table 2). These five phases of the disengagement process represent stages that romantic partners experience as they uncouple. Notably, all four of the Disengagement Resistance Strategies (Negativity, Alignment, Commitment, and Harm) are located in the Disintegration Phase. This phase includes behaviors that tend to weaken the relationship, stagnating

communication, spoken discontent, confrontation of the partner, as well as negotiation tactics to force discussion of controversial relationship issues. Whether directed toward the spouse or others, all four strategies identified in the current study used by Non-Initiators to resist relational disengagement attempts by a spouse occur during the Disintegration phase of dissolution.

Figure 9

Intersexual and Intrasexual Tactics within Disengagement Resistance Strategies

Intersexual: (Directed toward Spouse)

Negativity Strategy

emotional manipulation
 derogation of mate
 jealousy inducement
 vigilance
 concealment of mate

Alignment Strategy

punishment of mate's infidelity threat
 sexual inducement

Commitment Strategy

submission and debasement
 love and care
 commitment manipulation

Harm Strategy

n/a

Intrasexual: (Directed toward Others)

Negativity Strategy

n/a

Alignment Strategy

verbal possession signals
 physical possession signals

Commitment Strategy

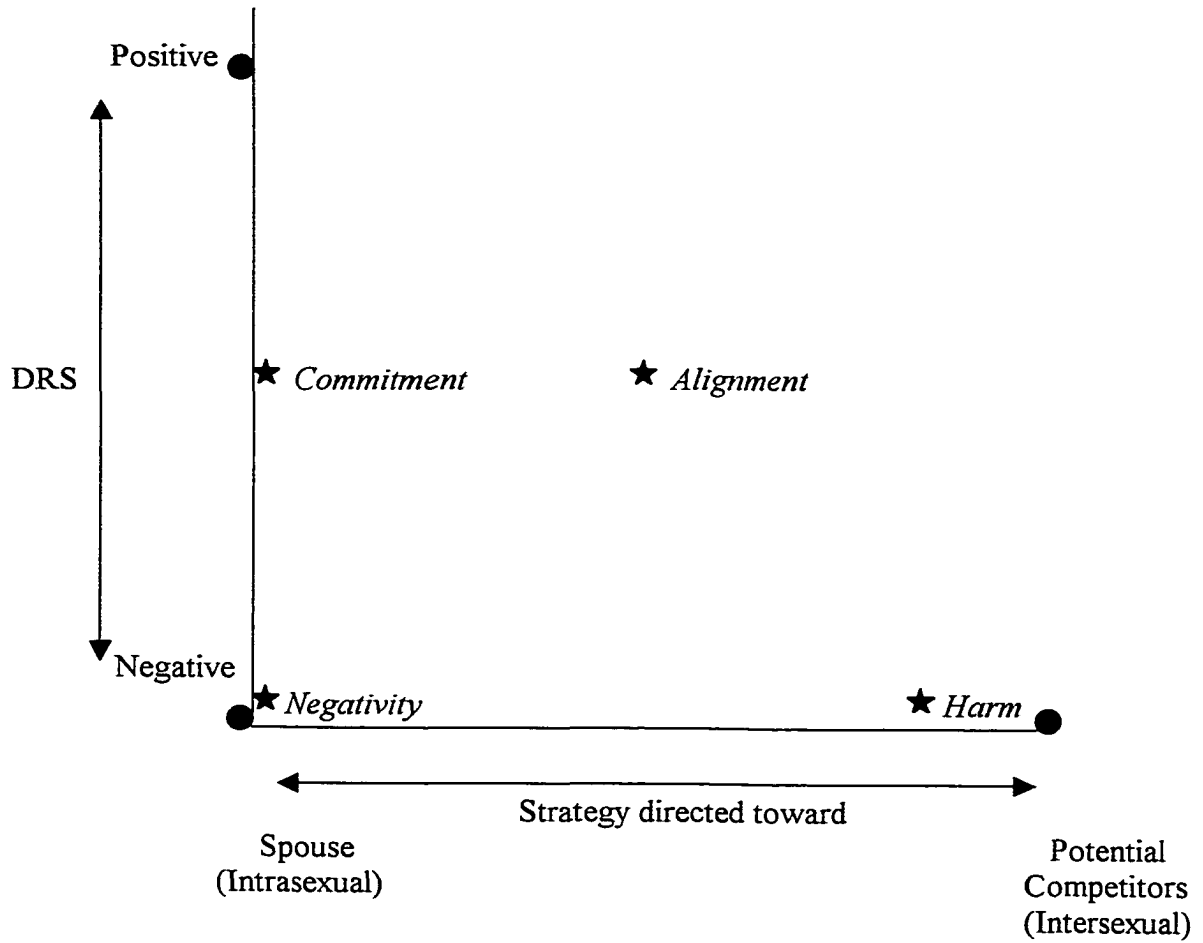
n/a

Harm Strategy

violence against rivals
 intrasexual threats

Figure 10

Disengagement Resistance Strategies Grid



Implications

The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. The current study validates the significance of examining marital dissolution from a communication perspective. Because this study addresses the dark side of interpersonal relationships, these results have potential ramifications for theoretical research on relationship dissolution. This is the first communication study to focus solely on the standpoint of the partner who did not want the marriage to end—and identify strategies used to resist the marital demise. Unlike the development stages of romantic relationships, disengagement is not buoyant, optimistic, or unambiguous. This study also suggests that stage theories of relationship decline may be irrelevant to partners who resist termination of the relationship.

These findings have practical application value for both premarital and divorce counseling. Relationship demographic variables affecting marital stability (e.g., age at marriage and the presence of children) are associated with divorce rates (White, 1990). The benefits of knowledge concerning characteristics of individuals who are more at risk for divorce in premarital guidance are discussed by Schwartz and Scott (2000):

By understanding how these factors can influence a marital relationship, people contemplating marriage can better evaluate their chances of a successful marriage. For example, knowing that the age at marriage can increase or decrease the likelihood of divorce may lead people more realistically to evaluate their readiness for marriage (p. 359).

Because divorce causes a wide variety of problems that affect the couple as well as the extended family, a growing number of marriage counselors and other professionals

are helping individuals deal with the aftermath of divorce (Schwartz & Scott, 2000).

Counseling make take the form of divorce counseling, conciliation counseling, or divorce mediation. Couples can learn negotiating skills that help them deal with an impending or current divorce situation. An awareness of factors predictive of or influencing divorce is helpful to couples considering marriage or divorce.

The findings of the current study also have practical application for mental health outcomes. Human beings are the most social animals in existence. As a result of this social orientation, humans highly regard their interpersonal relationships. Not only are humans strongly influenced by their interpersonal relationships, but they also attach great psychological importance to them. For most individuals, emotional connections with others through interpersonal relationships are what make living worthwhile. When an intimate personal relationship is distressed, the problematic interpersonal relationship may initiate or contribute to serious mental health problems such as depression, loneliness, severe anxiety, or alcoholism (Segrin, 1998).

Finally, the current study has implications for couples of varying socio-economic status. Generally, the lower the income, the more likely a couple is to divorce (Martin & Bumpass, 1991). Low income and its accompanying pressures are a major factor in the high divorce rates found among some groups of people. Particularly impacted are young couples with insufficient financial resources (Spanier & Glick, 1981). However, since this study did not systematically assess income level, the results apply primarily to divorced individuals who have the time and money to attend divorce support or divorce recovery group sessions.

Because people tend to underestimate their risks of encountering an assortment of unwelcome events in their lives (Taylor & Brown, 1988), they are often caught off-guard. This false sense of confidence prevents realistic preparation for unavoidable predicaments such as relationship dissolution. Lack of understanding about what may occur during relational disintegration and termination inhibits informed choices and responses to inevitable relational changes. Miller (1997) proposes that if we apply “relational realism” (understanding and accepting that unpleasantness is normal, even in favorable relationships) in our perceptions of and expectations for our close relationships, we are better able to manage relational communication obstacles that arise.

Limitations

Retrospective data such as survey questionnaires are appropriate for research questions involving how and why partners enact and accomplish breakups (Cupach & Metts, 1986). However, several disadvantages may arise from the use of retrospective self-reports. In addition to memory obscurities, Metts, Sprecher, and Cupach (1991) note limitations of using retrospective self-reports in studying interpersonal conflict: “the inability to measure interaction directly, the inability to capture the processual nature of interactions and relationships, and the perceptual biases attendant on self-reports” (p. 169). Systematic perceptual biases such as egocentric bias, the negativity effect, and social desirability might serve to elucidate Non-Initiators’ responses in the current study. Egocentric bias is manifested when responses indicate that participants are more aware of their own feelings and behaviors than those of their partner (Christensen, Sullaway, & King, 1983). The negativity effect occurs when respondents make judgments and negative information is weighted more heavily than other information (Kanouse &

Hanson, 1972). Social desirability is often a result of the participant attempting to present a positive and socially acceptable self-image (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960).

Respondents involved in the current study may exhibit characteristics associated with egocentric bias, the negativity effect, and social desirability. First, it is logical to assume that a certain amount of egocentric bias exists in self report data. Moreover, because participants in the current study were asked to answer questions concerning their own resistance, they were naturally more acutely attuned to their own feelings and behaviors than to those of their spouses. Actually, the egocentric bias might have a advantageous effect in this study, since the bona fide strategic communication behaviors that Non-Initiators use during disengagement is the focus of this study, not Non-Initiators' perceptions of their spouses' communication.

Second, it does not appear that respondents engaged in the negativity effect in the current study. This makes sense in light of the fact that respondents were self-reporting their own behaviors. If, however, respondents had evaluated their spouses' behaviors, the negativity effect, or weighting negative information more heavily might have occurred.

Third, it is very likely in this study that participants' responses to the survey reflect characteristics of social desirability. One obvious example of this can be found in the results of the Harm strategy. Because tactics within the Harm strategy are not only destructive communication behaviors, but also socially deplorable, respondents were not inclined to readily identify themselves as using this antisocial strategy.

Another limitation to the current study is the sampling procedures. External validity may be compromised since an emphasis was not placed on sampling people in all levels of income brackets. Because participants were located mainly through divorce

support and recovery groups, divorced individuals without monetary resources (e.g., low socio-economic status) may have been excluded from this study. Therefore, the results from this study apply primarily to people who have the time to attend meetings and participate in a regularly-scheduled group engagement.

Finally, initial correlations among the 19 tactics are produced a large number of size effects. One problem with interpreting correlation coefficients is assuming that simply because two variables are correlated, they are meaningfully related (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). These spurious relationships may be considered as a limitation. The strength of association among the variables does not necessarily equate with practical utility.

Future Research Program

As extensions of the current study, future research will investigate why some divorced couples are able to manage a “lateral shift,” or maintain continued psychological closeness in their relationships after disengaging (Baxter, 1983). As Canary, Cody, and Manusov (2000) note: “Very few studies have examined the question of staying friends after a relational disengagement” (p. 288). Further, Graham (1997) notes that “surprisingly little research has focused on the continued relationship between former spouses and/or the reconfigured family resulting from divorce” (p. 350). Based on results of the current study, I have identified three promising avenues of study that I plan to pursue: (a) reasons why spouses divorce; (b) married couples who divorce based on a third party (attractive alternatives), and (c) turning points in the marital dissolution process. Continuing investigation that focuses on disengagement resistance strategies,

these three areas of study will underscore the communicative behaviors of Non-Initiators and their influence on whether divorcees were able to maintain post-divorce friendships.

In the first extension of the current study, research will examine why some divorced couples are able to make a “lateral shift” or maintain some degree of intimacy after their divorce based on reasons for the marital split. Scholars have found that some divided partners are capable of continuing an amicable relationship, depending on the circumstances of the relational termination (Banks, Altendorf, Greene, & Cody, 1987; Sprecher, 1994). Reasons for termination seem to be the most influential factor in determining whether unbonded couples can remain friends. Although communication research explored reasons for romantic and friendship breakups, it has not delved into divorced individuals’ perceptions of reasons for the marital breakup. Further, extant research has not addressed the Non-Initiators’ viewpoint concerning reasons for the end of the marriage. An investigation focusing on what strategies Non-Initiators used to resist a divorce and the impact on the shift of the relationship would be of interest. Whether Non-Initiators perpetuate a cordial relationship with their former spouses might hinge on their reasons for the dissolution and the DRS employed.

The second prospective line of research concerns factors associated with married couples who divorce based on a third party (attractive alternatives—e.g., Rusbult, 1987) and whether the former couple accomplishes a “lateral shift.” Individuals in relationships who possess desirable alternatives are more vulnerable to dissolution (Simpson, 1987; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). According to Metts (1994), a sexual affair is the most common reference to and archetypal exemplar of a relational transgression. Not only are transgressions “a source of relational disruption” possessing specific features: salience,

focus, and consequence; they are “violations of relationally relevant rules” (Metts, 1994, p. 218).

Research has shown that partners who split due to the involvement of a third party suffer greater emotional consequences such as post-breakup distress and have stronger, more negative feelings toward a former lover (Fine & Sacher, 1997; Sprecher, 1994). If Non-Initiators report feeling more negatively toward the ex-spouse because of a third party’s involvement, then their emotional reactions to the attempted breakup might influence which DRS Non-Initiators used to resist divorce. Further, if a potential competitor threatened the marriage, it would be interesting to discover how Non-Initiators attempted to restore psychological or actual relationship equity both prior to and following the demise of the marriage. Disengagement themes emerging from Non-Initiators’ reactions to a third party involvement could further characterize the course of marital termination.

Third, a viable area of relational disengagement will focus on turning points in marital dissolution. Initially introduced by Bolton (1961), the turning point is defined by Baxter and Bullis (1986) as “any event or occurrence that is associated with change in a relationship” (p. 470). In order to delineate specific turning points, Baxter and Bullis (1986) distinguished 25 types and collapsed them into 13 categories. However, the majority of the turning points were associated with strengthening the couples’ commitment, whereas only three (external competition, disengagement, and negative psychic change) propelled couples toward an unraveling relationship (Baxter & Bullis, 1986). Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, and Cate (1981) used the retrospective interview technique (RIT) to detect relational turning points and then pinpoint them on a grid.

However, this study focused on the escalation, not disintegration or termination, of romantic relationships (Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, & Cate, 1981).

In a study of divorced individuals, Graham (1997) used RIT to identify eleven turning points that characterize and define post-divorce relationships. More recently, Baxter and Erbert (1999) examined turning points in heterosexual romantic relationships. However, this study focuses on relational development, rather than decline or termination and participants were not divorced (Baxter & Erbert, 1999). Distressing turning points or critical incidents during marital breakdown may influence Non-Initiators' use of explicit DRS. By identifying unpleasant turning points and DRS that they employed, more information can be acquired concerning Non-Initiators' communication in the marital dissolution process.

As in the current investigation, these three proposed courses of relationship dissolution research will also focus on the viewpoint of divorced Non-Initiators. In an effort to broaden the scope of communication inquiry and increase understanding of the actual relationship termination process, these ideas are valuable for future studies.

Conclusions

Although extensive amounts of research have been conducted on the processes involved in relationship development, in comparison, relatively little literature addresses dissolving relationships (Miller & Parks, 1982) --especially marriages. Commenting on the lack of research concerning the process of relationship dissolution, Watrous and Honeychurch (1999) note that this "lack of conventional wisdom can leave us with less of a sense of how a breakup actually works..." (p. 8). From the Non-Initiators' perspective, the current study examines uncoupling as an important facet of the relational process.

Although investigations on mate retention tactics (Buss, 1988; Buss & Shackelford, 1997) provide a good start, more information is needed on communication during the marital disengagement process. The impetus for this study was based on findings about mate retention tactics, the generation of tactics from acts, and the psychological perspective explored by Buss (1988) and Buss and Shackelford (1997). From an evolutionary perspective, these researchers concentrated on sex differences, perceived effectiveness, and frequency use in mate retention.

The current study originated to acknowledge and understand the role of communication during relational dissolution. As Wood (1982) maintains: "Relational culture arises out of communication and becomes an increasingly central influence on individual partners' ways of knowing, being, and acting in relation to each other and the outside world" (Wood, 1982, p. 75).

The advantages of the current study include: a focus on the Non-Initiator, concentrating on real contexts, how disengagement resistance tactics coalesce to create overall communication strategies, and the examination of relationship demographic variables that might precede the use of strategies to contextualize DRS. First, by focusing on the Non-Initiator, a new perspective is explored. Most dissolution research ignores this viewpoint. Second, real-life marital uncouplings are examined. Participants had to have actually have been divorced--not friends, dating partners, or newlyweds. Instead of examining hypothetical or dating situations, the current study targets the unraveling relationship and eventual divorce of participants. Divorced individuals disengage from relationships that require more investment and enmeshed lives. Finally, relationship

demographic variables associated with the use of strategies in order to contextualize DRS are identified.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM**Relationship Disengagement**

From the Researcher: Under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma, the purpose of this research project is to explore the communicative aspects of relational disengagement. Specifically, the researcher is interested in individual's perceptions of how people communicate with each other when relationships come apart.

At any point during the written survey, you may choose not to answer questions or terminate completion of the survey without penalty. While this study may benefit scholars and professionals by providing descriptive knowledge, there are no known risks associated with this survey.

For questions regarding your rights as a participant in this survey, please contact the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757. You have the right and the responsibility to contact the researcher with any questions that you may have concerning this study.

Merry Buchanan
Department of Communication
Burton Hall 101
Norman, Oklahoma 73019
(405) 325-3003 x21139

Participant's Agreement: By signing below, I understand that my participation in this survey is voluntary and I may quit at any time. I understand that this survey is for the purposes of gaining a better understanding of how people disengage from relationships and that the data will be stored in a locked file cabinet and reported in a collective manner without identifying me personally.

Informed Consent Signature

Date

Appendix B

Background Information

Gender (circle one): Male Female

Age: _____

Your Highest Level of Education (check one):

High school diploma _____

some college _____

Associate degree (2 years) _____

Bachelor's degree _____

Master's degree _____

Ph.D. _____

Please describe your ethnic background: (example: *African American, White, Chinese, Swedish, etc.*) _____

How many times have you been married? _____

Are you currently:

_____ married

_____ separated

_____ widowed

_____ divorced

_____ never married

If you have been married more than once, please answer the following questions based on YOUR MOST RECENT DIVORCE:

How long had you been in your past marriage? _____ Years _____ Months

How long was your courtship/dating period before you married? _____ Years _____ Months

Your age when you married _____

Your age when you divorced _____

Your spouse's age when you married _____

Your spouse's age when you divorced _____

Do you have any children? _____ no

_____ yes

If yes, list age(s) & sex of your children _____

Was your previous marriage a two career marriage or a one career marriage?

_____ 2 careers _____ 1 career

Who initiated the breakup of your marriage? In other words, who most "wanted out" of the relationship?

_____ my partner wanted out more than I did

_____ I wanted out more than my partner

On a scale of 1-7, circle the answer that most closely represents your view:

7 I wanted out of the relationship more than my partner

6

5

4 We both wanted out of the relationship equally

3

2

1 My partner wanted out more than I did

Appendix C

Survey: Responses to My Partner Who Wanted to End Our Relationship**Directions & Sample Question**

If you wanted to keep your relationship (and your partner wanted out), please respond to the following statements.

Listed below are acts that someone might perform to keep or retain his/her spouse and prevent him/her from leaving the relationship. In this study, the researcher is interested in what you did to try to keep your spouse.

The survey begins on the following page. Write in the number that most closely corresponds to your answer. Below is a sample question:

WHEN I KNEW THAT MY SPOUSE WANTED TO BREAK UP...

 3 *(Sample Question)*. I tried to make myself more attractive to my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

WHEN I KNEW THAT MY SPOUSE WANTED TO BREAK UP...**_____ 1. I tried to make myself more attractive to my spouse.**

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 2. I asked my spouse to commit more fully to our relationship.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 3. I tried to limit my spouse's contact with other people.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 4. I communicated bad things about someone I thought was competing for my spouse's attention.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 5. I called my spouse names and put him/her down.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 6. I tried to make my partner feel guilty.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 7. I threatened to harm others who might come between me and my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 8. I threatened to be unfaithful to my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 9. I tried to be more helpful to my spouse to show that I cared.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 10. I insisted that my spouse spend his/her free time with me.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 11. I tried to show others that my partner was taken.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 12. I wore clothes or accessories that belonged to my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 13. I threatened to break up with my spouse if he/she ever cheated on me.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 14. I gave gifts to my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 15. I tried to make my spouse want me sexually.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 16. I told my spouse that I would do anything to save our relationship.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 17. In public, I talked to my spouse so that others would know that he/she belonged to me.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 18. I checked on my spouse to find out where he/she was or whom he/she was with.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

_____ 19. I physically fought with or vandalized property of someone I thought was interested in my spouse.

Always	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Very Seldom	Never
7	6	5	4	3	2	1



The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

February 25, 1999

Ms. Merry Buchanan
1305 N Davis Avenue
Oklahoma City OK 73127

Dear Ms. Buchanan:

Your research application, "Relationship Disengagement," has been reviewed according to the policies of the Institutional Review Board chaired by Dr. E. Laurette Taylor and found to be exempt from the requirements for full board review. Your project is approved under the regulations of the University of Oklahoma-Norman Campus Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research Activities.

Should you wish to deviate from the described protocol, you must notify me and obtain prior approval from the Board for the changes. If the research is to extend beyond 12 months, you must contact this office, in writing, noting any changes or revisions in the protocol and/or informed consent forms, and request an extension of this ruling.

If you have any questions, please contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D.
Administrative Officer
Institutional Review Board

SWS:pw
FY99-149

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
Dr. H. Dan O'Hair, Communication



The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

October 16, 2000

Ms. Merry Buchanan
1305 N Davis Avenue
Oklahoma City OK 73127

SUBJECT: "Relationship Disengagement"

Dear Ms. Buchanan:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your requested revisions and extension to the subject protocol. The project has been extended through February 25, 2001.

Please note that this approval is for the protocol and informed consent form reviewed and approved by the Board on February 25, 1999 and the revisions noted in your letter of October 16, 2000. If you wish to make additional changes, you will need to submit a request for change to this office for review.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 325-4757.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wyatt Sedwick

Susan Wyatt Sedwick, Ph.D.
Administrative Officer
Institutional Review Board-Norman Campus

SWS:pw
FY99-149

cc: Dr. E. Laurette Taylor, Chair, Institutional Review Board
Dr. H. Dan O'Hair, Communication

Interoffice Memorandum

To: Merry Buchanan
Speech Communications Dept.
TCU Box 298040
TCU
Fort Worth, TX 76129

Date: October 23, 2000

From: Rose T. Garcia

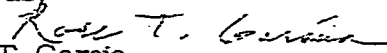
Subject: Divorce Recovery

Thank you for explaining your research about break ups to us.

You made some really good points about people breaking up which I'm sure helped us all. You are really entertaining and fun. Your students must really enjoy your classes.

This letter verifies that our group filled out your surveys. Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to come and talk with us. If you want to come back again, please do since we usually have more people in our meetings which are not in the summer.

Regards,


Rose T. Garcia

Allegiance

Divorce Recovery

October 17, 2000

Merry Buchanan
6131 Avery Drive, Apt. #8110
Ft. Worth, Texas 76132

Dear Ms. Buchanan,

Thank you for attending our TrAAnsitions meeting this summer and speaking about relationship dynamics. As a newly established Employee Resource Group (ERG), your speech gave us quite a bit of topics to discuss and many points to focus on in future meetings. We appreciated your time and we are happy to assist you with your research. Enclosed are a few of the completed surveys from some of our members. Good luck in writing your book, maybe we will see you on Oprah!

Sincerely,


Marjorie Beasley, Director

TrAAnsitions Support Group