

The Relationship Between Conflict and Communication, Sex, Relationship
Satisfaction, and other Relational Variables in Dating Relationships

by

Tammy Lowery Zacchilli, B.S, M.S.

A Dissertation

In

EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved

Clyde Hendrick, PhD

Susan S. Hendrick, PhD

Darcy Reich, PhD

Sheila Garos, PhD

John Borrelli
Dean of the Graduate School

May 2007

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation toward my committee members, Dr. Clyde Hendrick (chair), Dr. Susan Hendrick, Dr. Darcy Reich, and Dr. Sheila Garos. Your support, time, and effort have been invaluable to this dissertation project and the scale development. Thank you for helping me to develop a project for which I feel a great deal of pride. To Dr. Garos, thank you for serving on my committee and offering great suggestions on how to improve aspects of the research. To Dr. Reich, thank you for being so supportive during the past four years and for all the statistical advice. To Dr. Susan Hendrick, thank you for your continued support and guidance during the past four years. Thank you for all your great suggestions throughout the process of scale development. Finally, I want to express special appreciation to the chair of my dissertation and my advisor, Dr. Clyde Hendrick. You have been an inspiration and have contributed immensely to both my professional and personal development. Thank you for your support and guidance during the past four years. You have been the best advisor that I could ask for and I will always admire you.

To Amanda Wheeler, thank you for being such a great friend. We have been through so much together in these four short years. I look forward to more years of fun to come. I love you.

To all of my family back in Georgia, thank you for understanding how much school means to me and for being so supportive. I could not have made it this far without you. It has been hard being away from you and I hope we will all be close again soon!! I love you so much.

Finally, I want to thank my husband, Mike, for his support and love. Thank you so much for being so supportive and willing to move to Texas so that I could pursue my dreams. I love you very much. To my sweet Alexis, you have inspired me and will always be my little angel. I will always be here for you. I love you, sweet pea!

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract.....	ix
List of Tables.....	x
Chapter I.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Theories of Conflict.....	2
Systems theory.....	2
Behavioral theories of conflict strategies.....	3
Conflict and Satisfaction.....	7
Conflict and Communication.....	12
Conflict and Type of Relationship.....	13
Conflict and Love.....	15
Conflict and Sexuality.....	16
Gender Issues in Conflict.....	17
Other Relational Variables.....	20
Respect.....	20
Commitment.....	21
Sociosexuality.....	24
Current Research.....	24
Hypotheses.....	26

Chapter II.....	31
Study 1.....	31
Method.....	31
Participants.....	31
Instruments.....	31
Conflict.....	31
Sexual attitudes.....	32
Perceptions of love and sex.....	32
Relationship satisfaction.....	33
Respect.....	33
Love styles.....	33
Self-disclosure.....	33
Sociosexuality.....	34
Self-esteem.....	34
Procedure.....	34
Results.....	35
Table 1.....	37
Table 2.....	38
Table 3.....	40
Discussion.....	41
Note.....	43

Chapter III.....	44
Study 2.....	44
Method.....	44
Participants.....	44
Procedure and Instruments.....	44
Results.....	45
Table 4.....	47
Table 5.....	50
Discussion.....	51
Chapter IV.....	53
Study 3.....	53
Method.....	53
Participants.....	53
Instruments.....	53
Relationship satisfaction.....	53
Love styles.....	54
Respect.....	54
Sexual attitudes.....	54
Self-disclosure.....	54
Conflict.....	54
Sexual communication.....	55

Sociosexuality.....	56
Self-esteem.....	56
Procedures.....	56
Results.....	57
Overview of Analysis.....	57
Data Screening.....	58
Demographic and Relationship Background Data....	59
Confirmatory Factor Analysis on RPCS.....	60
Table 6.....	62
Table 7.....	63
Table 8.....	64
Table 9.....	67
Tests of Hypotheses.....	68
Correlational Analyses.....	68
Table 10.....	73
Gender Differences in Conflict Strategies.....	75
Relationship Status Differences in Conflict.....	75
Conflict as a Mediator of Self-disclosure and Satisfaction.....	77
Conflict as a Mediator of Sexual Communication and Satisfaction.....	80
Commitment as a Mediator of Love Styles and Compromise.....	83
Commitment as a Mediator of Love Styles and Interactional Reactivity.....	86

Length of Relationship and Commitment Predicting Conflict.....	88
Exploratory Regression Analyses Predicting Conflict Strategies.....	89
Correlations Between Relational Variables.....	93
Table 11.....	95
Discussion.....	98
Conflict and Communication.....	99
Conflict and Relationship Satisfaction.....	101
Conflict and Respect.....	102
Conflict and Gender.....	103
Conflict and Type of Relationship.....	104
Conflict, Communication, and Satisfaction.....	105
Conflict and Sexuality.....	106
Conflict and Love.....	107
Communication, Love, and Conflict.....	109
Chapter V.....	110
General Discussion and Implications.....	110
Summary.....	110
Limitations.....	110
Directions for Future Research.....	111
Conflict in Human Relationships.....	112

References.....117

Appendices.....124

- A. Extended Literature Review.....124
- B. Informed Consent.....159
- C. Background Questionnaire.....160
- D. Love and Relationship Biography.....161
- E. Relationship Assessment Scale.....163
- F. Love Attitudes: Short Form.....164
- G. Respect Scale.....166
- H. Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale.....167
- I. Self-disclosure Index.....169
- J. Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.....170
- K. Episode-specific Conflict Tactics Scale.....173
- L. Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale.....175
- M. Sociosexual Orientation Inventory.....176
- N. Self-esteem.....177
- O. Debriefing.....178

Abstract

Whether couples have been dating a few months or have been married for many years, conflict is likely an inevitable part of the relationship. According to Canary, Cupach, and Messman (1995), how couples handle conflict informs other areas of their relationship, such as how satisfied they are in their relationship. Thus, when examining other relational variables it is important to understand how individuals approach conflict with their partner. In Study 1, the relationships between three conflict strategies (i.e., compromise, emotional reactivity, interactional reactivity) and other variables such as satisfaction, respect, sexual attitudes, and self-disclosure were assessed. In Study 2, items for a new conflict scale, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS; 39 items), were developed and subjected to a factor analysis. Six factors emerged: Compromise, Domination, Submission, Separation, Avoidance, and Interactional Reactivity. The relationships between these six strategies and respect, commitment, and satisfaction were assessed. The goals of Study 3 were to confirm the factor structure of the RPCS and to relate the six subscales to self-disclosure, sex, commitment, love, satisfaction, and respect. Confirmatory factor analyses tested two, three, five, and six factor models. The six factor model resulted in the best fitting model. Alphas for the subscales ranged from .84 to .96 and the subscales correlated appropriately with the other relational variables. Implications for this new conflict scale, as well as limitations of the studies, are discussed.

List of Tables

1. Factor Loadings for Items in Each of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscales.....	48
2. Correlations between Preliminary Conflict Subscales and Relational Variables from Study 1.....	49
3. Correlations between Preliminary Conflict Subscales from Study 1.....	51
4. Items and Factor Loadings for Each Subscale in the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale from Study 2	57
5. Correlations between Factors of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale from Study 2.....	60
6. Fit Indices for 2, 3, 5, and 6 Factor Models of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale.....	72
7. Correlations Between Factors of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale From Study 3.....	73
8. Items and Standardized Loadings for Each Subscale in the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale From Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Study 3.....	74
9. Correlations Between Subscales of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale.....	77
10. Correlations Between Subscales of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Relational Variables.....	83
11. Correlations Between Relational Variables.....	105

Chapter I

Introduction

Michael and Denise have been married for 10 years and experience conflict several times a week. They often argue about financial issues and raising their children. Chad and Melissa have been living together for two years and have conflict about once a week. They often argue about chores around the home and whether or not they will marry. Corey and Dawn have been dating almost six months and experience conflict about once or twice a month. They argue about spending time together and where they will go during the weekend. These couples are quite different but all have one thing in common. All three couples will experience some degree of conflict during the course of their relationships.

Conflict is a part of almost all relationships and romantic relationships are no exception. Conflict in romantic relationships may be characterized by a verbal disagreement, shouting, and in extreme cases violence. While these examples may be destructive to the relationship, conflict may also be characterized by constructive responses such as cooperation or cooling off before addressing the issue further.

According to Peterson (1983, p. 365), conflict is “an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another.” Any situation in which two or more people hold incompatible goals, and one person’s attempt at attaining the goal interferes with goal attainment of the other person, may be considered conflict. It is not difficult to see how these definitions can apply to conflict in romantic relationships. For example, a wife’s career goals may be incompatible with her husband’s desire for having children right away. These incompatible goals would likely

cause the couple to experience conflict because the wife's decisions interfere with the husband's goal of having children.

Theories of Conflict

The relationship between conflict and other relational variables has been studied in the close relationship literature. Additionally, there are several theories of conflict that attempt to describe these relationships, how couples interpret and resolve conflict, and how they select a particular strategy for dealing with conflict. Theories of relationship conflict include attribution theory (Lulofs & Cahn, 2000; Sillars, 1980), Kelley and Thibaut's (1978) social exchange theory, Ruben's (1978) systems theory, and behavioral theories of conflict strategies. The selected theories below were important in guiding the development of the current research.

Systems theory. According to Ruben's (1978) systems theory, conflict results from a breakdown in communication. Conflict is a part of all relationships and thus should be considered a normal part of relationships. Conflict is necessary for any relationship to experience growth. Because conflict is a result of communication problems, the best way for a couple to resolve conflict is through communication.

Consistent with systems theory, Christensen and Shenk (1991) reported that marital dissatisfaction is often related to communication problems. Specifically, the authors found that couples who were dissatisfied with their relationships had poorer communication skills than couples who were satisfied. Distressed couples often report that they experience conflict over communication difficulties such as not talking to each other enough (Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988). When couples use destructive rather than constructive means of problem solving, they are likely to become dissatisfied.

Destructive strategies may include avoiding the issue as well as discussing the issue in non-effective ways such as yelling or dominating one's partner. These examples would be consistent with the systems view of conflict.

Therefore, there is some evidence in support of the systems theory of conflict in romantic relationships. Dissatisfied couples appear to have more communication problems than couples who are satisfied with their romantic relationships.

Communication problems may also influence the particular strategy a couple uses when faced with conflict.

Behavioral theories of conflict strategies. Behavioral theories of conflict propose that the conflict **strategy** a person uses is more important to relational satisfaction than the **frequency** of conflict. Behavioral theory focuses on the behavioral strategies used during the conflict process, rather than with cognitive processes per se. Similar to systems theory, the behavioral approach also proposes that communication is a primary cause of relationship conflict (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Relationship conflict may include a variety of behaviors ranging from verbal disagreements, to the silent treatment, to avoidance, to physical assault. Couples may use different behavioral strategies when faced with conflict and the same couple may approach one conflict issue (e.g., money) differently from another issue (e.g., raising children). Several strategies have been identified by researchers and these strategies have been examined in relation to other relational variables such as satisfaction and love.

While not all researchers agree about the number of conflict strategies, there does seem to be some overlap in the descriptions of these strategies. Many researchers have identified five strategies but others have identified four and even three primary strategies.

Peterson (1983) described five strategies: separation, domination, compromise, integrative agreement, and structural improvement. Separation is characterized by a “cooling off” period with the intention of returning to discuss the conflict issue. This strategy may be useful if couples use the time apart for thinking about solutions to the problem. Domination is characterized by one partner attempting to persuade the other into choosing the partner’s side of the issue. Thus, one partner is motivated by selfishness and uses power to coerce the other to give in to the partner’s wishes rather than trying to hear both sides of the argument.

Peterson (1983) described compromise as a strategy in which couples search for a solution that is acceptable to both partners. Partners using compromise must be willing to each give a little to reach a decision. Integrative agreements differ from compromise because partners using this strategy attempt to satisfy both sets of expectations. This strategy may seem like an ideal way of dealing with conflict but may actually be quite difficult to implement especially when both sides of the arguments are very different. Finally, structural improvement influences how partners treat one another more generally. For example, rather than trying to reach a mutual agreement, these couples may try to use more open communication or become more intimate with one another.

Gottman (1993) examined five types of couples in relation to how these couples deal with conflict in their relationships. In an earlier study, Gottman and Levenson (1992) identified two couple types: regulated and nonregulated. The regulated couples were those couples who used more positive than negative interactions when discussing a conflict issue. The nonregulated couples were those couples who had more negative than positive interactions. Gottman (1993) extended these findings and identified three stable

(i.e., validators, volatiles, and avoiders) and two unstable types of couples (i.e., hostile and hostile/detached). Validating and volatile couples are both considered to be conflict engagers. Observational data was collected from seventy-three couples at two time periods. Conflict resolution and affect were assessed and used to classify the five couple types.

Gottman (1993) found that validating couples were intermediate in their expression of emotion. When these couples discussed conflict issues, they seemed very calm. Volatile couples, on the other hand, expressed high amounts of both positive and negative emotions. These couples discussed conflict openly and were persuasive. Avoiders were low in emotion (negative and positive) and did not have specific strategies for dealing with conflict. In terms of unstable couples, hostile/detached couples were less engaging in conversations than hostile couples. Additionally, hostile/detached couples were more negative and less positive than hostile couples. The results of this study suggests that couples approach conflict differently and that the basis of these differences may lie in degree of positive versus negative affect as well as communication styles.

Lulofs and Cahn (2000) also proposed five strategies: avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. With avoidance, a partner of the couple may avoid discussing the issue or deny that the conflict is present. Accommodation is characterized by giving in to one's partner so that the conflict will end. Competition is similar to domination in that one partner coerces the other to agree with the partner's viewpoint. The goal of compromise is to find a middle ground, whereas the goal of collaboration, much like integrative agreements, is to satisfy both partners' expectations.

Canary and Cupach (1988) identified only three primary conflict strategies used by romantic partners. These strategies include avoidance, distributive tactics, and integrative tactics. Integrative strategies are characterized by cooperation and collaboration and are considered to be constructive. Integrative tactics are positively related to relationship satisfaction and intimacy. Distributive tactics, on the other hand, are destructive and involve criticism and sarcasm. Distributive tactics are related to low levels of communication and relationship satisfaction. Finally, avoidant strategies are characterized by denial of conflict and changing topics.

Clearly, there is disagreement about the number of major strategies used to deal with conflict, but researchers seem to agree on certain aspects of these strategies. For example, some strategies seem to be constructive to the relationship while others are destructive. Also, communication is a strong part of most major strategies. Finally, in most cases, satisfied and dissatisfied couples can be distinguished based on the strategies they choose to use when faced with conflict.

Conflict, whether constructive or destructive, seems to influence other aspects of the relationship such as satisfaction and communication. Unfortunately, there are few good measures of conflict, particularly everyday conflict, in the close relationship literature. In fact, the most commonly used conflict measure, Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, and Sugarman's (1996) Conflict Tactics Scale, focuses more on abusive marital relationships than everyday conflict. Although the Conflict Tactics Scale is the most commonly used measure of conflict, there are other conflict measures in the close relationship literature. For example, the Marital Agendas Protocol (Notarius & Vanzetti, 1983) assesses the degree in which a variety of issues (e.g., children, money, household

tasks) are sources of conflict in the couple's relationship. This measure assesses conflict issues rather than how partners approach conflict.

Another measure, The Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988), assesses three primary approaches to conflict: integrative, distributive, and avoidance. However, behavioral theories suggest that there may be more than three styles to deal with conflict so perhaps this measure does not assess all of the primary strategies for approaching conflict. Respondents are also asked to think about a specific instance of conflict rather than how they approach conflict in general. Heavey, Larson, Zumtobel, and Christensen's (1996) Communication Patterns Questionnaire assesses communication related to disagreements in romantic relationships. This scale has primarily been used to measure the demand/withdrawal pattern of conflict in marital couples.

There is a need for a scale that measures ordinary, everyday conflict in young couples, especially couples who are dating and moving toward some degree of commitment. Ideally, such a scale could tap the type and extent of conflict and its resolution strategies at different stages of the commitment process. Therefore, a primary focus of the current studies was to develop a new scale that measures conflict experienced by college students in dating relationships. It is also important to understand how conflict relates to other relational variables, a second major focus of the studies.

Conflict and Satisfaction

Several studies have focused on the relationship between conflict and relationship satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). Holmes and Murray (1996) reported that the conflict

strategy is more important to relationship satisfaction than frequency of conflict.

Similarly, Cramer (2004) stated that the conflict strategy is one of the strongest predictors of relationship satisfaction. While there is evidence that dissatisfied couples experience more frequent conflict than satisfied couples, the relationship between strategy and satisfaction seems to be much stronger particularly for well-established relationships (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997).

Rands, Levinger, and Mellinger (1981) identified four possible conflict resolution patterns related to satisfaction in young married couples. These authors identified three possible conflict strategies and two different outcomes. The strategies included spouse avoids, spouse attacks, or spouse compromises. Outcomes of these strategies could be either intimacy or escalation of conflict. The combination of these strategies and outcomes resulted in four possible patterns of conflict resolution. First, the nonintimate-aggressive type couples (Type 1) reported no satisfaction from conflict. More specifically, the couples experienced an escalation in conflict and were not intimate when conflict was resolved. Type 2, the nonintimate-nonaggressive type couples, did not experience much escalation or intimacy during conflict. Type 2 couples reported greater relationship satisfaction than Type 1 couples. The intimate-aggressive type (Type 3) couples reported attacking their partners during conflict but expected intimacy to follow conflict. Finally, the intimate-nonaggressive couples (Type 4) did not attack partners and were intimate following conflict. The Type 4 couples were the most satisfied of the four possible types.

Several studies have investigated how individual difference variables relate to conflict and satisfaction. Sanderson and Karetsky (2002) were interested in how

differences in intimacy goals influenced the relationship between conflict and relationship satisfaction. Participants responded to hypothetical dating conflicts as well as reported on conflict in their own romantic relationships. Intimacy goals and satisfaction were also assessed. Intimacy goals included striving for interdependence, communion, and self-disclosure in romantic relationships. The authors found that strong intimacy goals were associated with use of constructive conflict strategies such as compromise and open discussion and were related to greater relationship satisfaction. Individuals with strong intimacy goals were less likely to use avoidance when faced with conflict as well. The authors concluded that strong intimacy goals were likely related to relationship satisfaction because individuals holding such goals could deal more constructively and effectively with conflict in their romantic relationships. Thus, individuals who seek interdependence and self-disclosure in their romantic relationships are more likely to use constructive conflict strategies and in turn are more satisfied with their romantic relationships than individuals who do not have these goals.

Sinclair and Fehr (2005) also examined the relationship between individual difference variables, conflict, and satisfaction. Specifically, the authors investigated how self-construals were related to conflict and satisfaction in romantic relationships. Individuals with independent self-construals tend to have autonomous goals and are often more direct when communicating with others. Individuals with interdependent self-construals are indirect when communicating with others. Because communication is an important aspect of both conflict and self-construals, the authors expected self-construals to be related to choice of conflict strategy. Sinclair and Fehr used Rusbult et al.'s (1982) conception of conflict to study their hypotheses. These conflict styles include neglect,

exit, voice, and loyalty. Neglect is passive and destructive while exit is active and destructive to the relationship. Voice, on the other hand, is active and constructive while loyalty is passive and constructive to the relationship. Sinclair and Fehr found that individuals with independent self-construals were more likely to use voice when faced with conflict and less likely to use loyalty. Thus, this outcome supports the notion that individuals with independent self-construals are direct when communicating (or when in conflict) with another person. Individuals with interdependent self-construals were most likely to use loyalty. This finding supports the idea that individuals with interdependent self-construals are indirect when communicating with others.

In an even more recent study, Kammrath and Dweck (2006) examined the relationship between individual differences in implicit theories of personality and the choice to voice conflict. Individuals may be incremental theorists who believe that personality is flexible, capable of improvement or entity theorists who believe that personality is unchangeable. Kammrath and Dweck also used Rusbult et al.'s (1982) conception of conflict to test their predictions. Specifically, the authors predicted that incremental theorists would be more likely to openly discuss conflict issues in a constructive way. Entity theorists, on the other hand, would be less likely to express displeasure openly to their romantic partners. The authors tested the predictions in both a retrospective study (Study 1) and a prospective study (Study 2).

Kammrath and Dweck (2006) asked participants in Study 1 to describe a recent conflict event with their romantic partners. Participants were also asked to write about how they felt during the conflict and to rate the significance of the conflict. The authors found that participants reported using all four of the conflict responses (i.e., voice,

loyalty, exit, neglect). However, incremental theorists were more likely to work constructively to resolve the conflict issue and were more likely to express displeasure. Thus, these individuals likely felt that voicing dissatisfaction might be successful in resolving the conflict with their romantic partner (Kammrath & Dweck). Entity theorists were more likely to report using loyalty as a conflict response. Because entity theorists believe that personality is fixed, these individuals may not voice dissatisfaction as they expected it would result in little or no change.

In Study 2, participants were asked to recall a recent conflict and rate responses to the conflict (Kammrath & Dweck, 2006). Results of Study 2 indicated that incremental and entity theorists reported similar numbers of conflicts per week and report similar emotional responses. However, the two types of theorists differed in that the more upset the incremental theorists were the more likely they engaged in constructive, open discussion of the conflict issue. The more anger that the entity theorists experienced the less likely they were to openly discuss conflict. The results of these studies suggest that one's theory about personality (i.e., flexible vs. fixed) influences how the individual approaches relationship conflict. Specifically, if an individual believes personality can change, voicing conflict seems to be a reasonable and successful way to handle conflict. However, if an individual believes that personality is fixed, discussing conflict openly does not seem to be helpful in resolving conflict. The results of these studies also suggest the important role of social cognitions on choice to voice conflict or to not voice these dissatisfactions.

The results of the studies mentioned previously suggest that how conflict is handled is related to relationship satisfaction. Couples who use constructive conflict

strategies seem to be more satisfied than couples who use more destructive strategies. Also, these studies suggest that personality and other individual differences may be influential in choosing a conflict strategy.

Conflict and Communication

As previously mentioned, there seems to be a strong relationship between conflict and communication in romantic relationships. Communication is also related to other aspects of intimate relationships. Jourard (1971) described the powerful effects of communication on various aspects of a couple's relationship. Low levels of self-disclosure can have negative effects on the relationship. For example, Jourard explained that failure to disclose information could seriously affect individuals both emotionally and physically. In particular, if a partner does not disclose information, dissatisfaction and possibly termination of the relationship may occur. However, when individuals are disclosing, they are more satisfied, more committed, and experience greater love for partners (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). If individuals are willing to disclose to their partners, the relationship may be more likely to continue. In addition, past research has shown that disclosure involving both sexual and nonsexual issues increases both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Cupach & Comstock, 1990).

The inability to communicate about a variety of topics including sexual issues and money could easily put a strain on the relationship. In fact, some theories of conflict (e.g., systems theory, behavioral theories) propose that communication problems are a key component of conflict. As previously mentioned, Ruben's (1978) systems theory proposes that conflict results from a breakdown in communication between partners.

Previous research demonstrating that dissatisfied couples have more communication problems than satisfied couples is consistent with systems theory. According to Christensen & Shenk, (1991), behavioral theories also propose that conflict results from communication problems between partners. Because previous research has found a link between conflict and communication, self-disclosure was assessed in the current studies.

Conflict and Type of Relationship

Couples' relationships vary from one another on a number of factors including length of time in relationship and relationship status. Different types (or status) of romantic relationships (e.g., casual dating, serious dating) are characterized by different levels of interdependence (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). This degree of interdependence is related to a variety of other relational variables such as conflict, satisfaction, and sexual intimacy. Individuals often begin a relationship with different ideas about the roles they want in the relationship and the events they want to occur within the relationship (e.g., casual dating, eventual marriage, etc.). In early stages of the relationship, these expectations are usually not discussed openly. However, as the relationship progresses, any conflicts present regarding these expectations become apparent to the individuals involved. According to Braiker and Kelley, couples can choose one of two approaches when faced with this conflict: avoidance or constructive responses. With avoidance, there is little or no exchange of information between partners. With constructive responses, new norms, attitudes, and goals are developed in response to the conflict issue. Thus, there is greater exchange of information leading to better resolution of the problem.

At least one other study has examined the relationship between conflict and relationship stages. Lloyd and Cate (1985) obtained retrospective accounts of

relationship histories from individuals who had recently broken up with their partners. The authors identified five relationship stages: casual relationship, a couple but not 100% committed to each other, 100% committed, uncertain about future of relationship, and certain relationship would end. Participants responded to interview questions and were asked to report on conflict, love, maintenance (e.g., communication, self-disclosure), and ambivalence (e.g., confusion, anxiety). The authors found a developmental trend for conflict across the five stages of relationships. Specifically, they found that conflict increased from “casual” to “a couple,” from “a couple” to “committed,” and from “committed” to “uncertain.” There was no significant change in conflict from “uncertain” to “certain.” The authors explained that conflict differed as a function of whether the relationship was increasing in interdependence (i.e., casual, a couple, committed) or decreasing in interdependence (i.e., uncertain, certain). Interestingly, they found that as interdependence rose conflict rose as well but as interdependence decreased conflict continued to rise before leveling off until the relationship ended. Finally, Lloyd and Cate found that love and conflict were related at the “uncertain” and “certain stages,” maintenance was related to conflict at the stages of “casual,” “uncertain,” and “certain,” and that ambivalence was related to conflict at the stages of “casual,” “a couple,” and “committed”. These findings suggest that different relational variables are important at different stages of the relationship.

Past research suggests that conflict is more likely appear in later than earlier stages of the relationship (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). If conflict does emerge early in the relationship, the strategy chosen by the individual or couple may be different than if the

partners have been together for an extended period of time. The current studies examined this possibility.

Conflict and Love

It would be difficult to argue that love is not an important aspect of many romantic relationships. One conceptualization of love is that of love attitudes, or different styles of approaching love. Love attitudes have been examined extensively in the close relationship literature. Lee (1973, 1977) proposed a typology of six love styles based on historical reviews, literature reviews, and empirical evidence. Three of these styles are primary styles of loving: Eros (passionate love), Ludus (game-playing love), and Storge (friendship love). The remaining three styles, secondary love styles, are formed by combining the three primary styles (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Lee, 1977). Pragma, or practical love, results from the combination of Storge and Ludus. Mania, or possessive/dependent love, arises from the combination of Eros and Ludus. Finally, Agape, or selfless love, results from the combination of Eros and Storge.

Richardson, Hammock, Lubben, and Mickler (1989) found that the love styles individuals endorsed were related to their conflict responses. Participants responded to love attitudes, conflict, and dating attitudes. Results indicated that individuals who scored high on Eros (i.e., passionate love) and Agape (i.e., selfless love) were more likely to report using obliging and integrating strategies to deal with conflict. Individuals who were game-playing (Ludus) in their approach to love reported using both domination and avoidance when faced with conflict with their partners. The Ludus love style was negatively related to an integrating response (e.g., compromising, collaboration) likely because these individuals are less committed and unwilling to invest in the relationship.

Agape love was significantly negatively related to the use of domination as a conflict strategy. The authors explained this relationship by proposing that individuals who love selflessly likely do not find using power as an effective means of dealing with conflict with their partners. Finally, Pragma was significantly positively related to avoiding, Ludus was significantly positively related to compromise, and Storge was not significantly related to any of the conflict strategies. The results of this study suggest that understanding an individual's love style may be important in understanding the conflict strategy employed.

Conflict and Sexuality

Sexuality is also a very important aspect of most romantic relationships. In fact, Cramer (1998) reported that most individuals believe that sexual relations should take place within a romantic relationship. One area that has received little attention is the relationship between conflict and sexuality. According to Long, Cate, Fehsenfeld, and Williams (1996), sexual conflict is a major source of conflict for couples in premarital relationships. In addition to developing a measure of premarital sexual conflict, the authors also examined the relationship between sexual conflict and other relational variables including general conflict and sexual satisfaction. Sexual conflict was defined as "a situation where one person attempts to achieve his/her goals at the expense of the other person" (p. 303). Long et al. found that greater levels of sexual conflict were related to greater general conflict. Also, they found that sexual satisfaction was negatively related to sexual conflict. Greater pressure to engage in sex was also related to greater sexual conflict. Finally, Time 1 measures of conflict predicted low levels of relationship satisfaction at Time 2. The results of this study suggest that sexual conflict is

related to a number of other relationship variables including general conflict, satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction. Thus, it is likely important to understand sexual aspects of the romantic relationship when examining conflict within that relationship.

Gender Issues in Conflict

Several studies have examined how gender influences choice of conflict strategies. In general, research has demonstrated that females use emotional and distributive tactics (e.g., criticism, anger) while males are more likely to use avoidance (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1998). According to Hoiyat (2000), females often use negative, active strategies while males use passive strategies such as avoidance when faced with conflict with romantic partners.

According to Lloyd (1987), examination of gender differences is essential to understanding the process of conflict in premarital relationships. In particular, males and females seem to respond differently to conflict issues in their relationships. Twenty-five couples who were seriously dating participated in a study examining gender differences in conflict and relationship quality. Results revealed that males found the stability of conflict issue to be most important to relationship quality while for females the number of conflicts was more salient. That is, for males, stability of conflict was related to low commitment and low levels of love. For females, on the other hand, greater number of conflicts was related to lower satisfaction and commitment. In addition, for females, quality of communication was related to number of conflicts as well as conflict resolution. For example, greater use of negotiation and less use of manipulation was related to fewer conflicts and more effective resolution. These results suggest that gender is an important factor to consider when examining conflict in romantic relationships.

Gender differences in conflict strategies as well as perceptions of partner's conflict strategy have also been examined (Hojjat, 2000). Conflict strategies were examined on two dimensions: active/passive and positive/negative. An active/positive strategy included strategies such as negotiation and compromise. An active/negative strategy included the use of coercion, abuse, and manipulation. Sacrifice and empathy were part of the passive/positive strategy. Finally, a passive/negative strategy included avoidance of the conflict issue as well as distancing self from the problem.

Hojjat (2000) found that women were more likely than men to use negative/active strategies such as assertion when faced with conflict. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to endorse avoidance as the preferred strategy when faced with conflict. For both men and women, negative strategies were significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Positive strategies, however, were not significantly related to satisfaction. Finally, women seemed to be more understanding of their partner's conflict strategy.

Another area that has received much attention is gender differences in the demand/withdrawal pattern of conflict. With this pattern, one partner approaches conflict while the other partner withdraws from the conflict. Although many studies have shown that wives are more likely to approach conflict and husbands are more likely to withdraw, Klinetob and Smith (1996) actually found a situation in which this is not always the case. Couples were asked to discuss two issues: one issue in which the wife wanted the husband to change and one in which the husband wanted the wife to change. Interestingly, when the wives' issues were discussed, the wives demanded and the husband withdrew. However, when the husbands' issues were discussed, the authors found the opposite pattern. That is, the men demanded and the wives withdrew from the

conflict. Thus, the situational context should be taken into account when studying the demand/withdrawal pattern and perhaps when examining other conflict strategies as well.

Results from another study suggest that gender-based social roles rather than gender per se have a stronger influence on use of the demand/withdrawal pattern (Vogel & Karney, 2002). Specifically, the social structure hypothesis proposes that communication patterns differ for husbands and wives because of the unequal nature of the relationship. Thus, the partner who needs the other to cooperate is more likely to become demanding during conflict while the partner who does not need the other's cooperation is more likely to withdraw from conflict. Therefore, because women are often in the subordinate role while men are in the superior role, women are more likely to demand while men withdraw during conflict (Vogel & Karney).

Vogel and Karney (2002) tested the social structure hypothesis by having newlyweds select topics to discuss with their partners in a laboratory setting. Each spouse chose one topic to discuss and also rated the importance of the topic. Marital satisfaction, in addition to demand/withdrawal, was also assessed. Results indicated that the behavior elicited by each partner during the discussion was a function of how invested the partner was in the problem. Women may not have chose topics important to the husband thus leading husbands to withdraw rather than demand. However, when husbands were invested in the problem, the gender differences in demand/withdrawal were decreased. These findings supported the social structure hypothesis.

The results of the previously mentioned studies provide support for the importance of examining gender differences when studying romantic conflict. It seems

that gender is related to chosen conflict strategy as well as perceptions of the conflict issue. Thus, gender differences were included in each of the three current studies.

Other Relational Variables

The relationship between conflict and many other relational variables (e.g., satisfaction, love, sexuality) have been assessed in the close relationship literature. However, there are other important relational variables that have not yet received much attention in relation to conflict. Research on respect, commitment, and sociosexuality will be discussed briefly below.

Respect

Although respect is an important aspect of close relationships, it has received little attention in the close relationship literature. Many researchers mention respect when discussing romantic relationships, but there does not seem to be a clear conceptualization of what respect is and how it relates to other variables (Frei & Shaver, 2002). Frei and Shaver took initial steps in an attempt to overcome these problems. Specifically, through a series of studies, they developed a definition of respect and also examined how respect related to other variables. In Study 1, participants responded to open-ended questions regarding respect in the context of general interpersonal relationships, parent/caregiver relationships, and romantic relationships. Using participants' responses to these questions, Frei and Shaver developed a definition of respect as "an attitudinal disposition toward a close relationship partner who is trustworthy, considerate, and accepting" (p. 125). In Study 2, the authors developed a measure of respect for partner. Finally, in Study 3, Frei and Shaver determined that respect was a better predictor of relationship satisfaction than love, liking, or attachment.

Frei and Shaver (2002) provided a good start for understanding respect in close relationships. However, their definition focused more on “features of a respectable relationship” (p. 124) than respect toward partner. More recently, S. Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) have developed a measure of respect based on six dimensions. These dimensions include: empowerment, healing, dialogue, curiosity, attention, and self-respect. In a series of studies, the authors examined how respect (using their Respect Toward Partner Scale) related to other relational variables such as love styles, sexual attitudes, disclosure, relationship satisfaction, and commitment. S. Hendrick and Hendrick found that respect was positively related to Eros, Storge, and Agape love, as well as with relationship satisfaction and commitment. Thus, individuals who respected their partners were more satisfied, more committed to relationship, and had love styles characterized by friendship (Storge), passion (Eros), and selflessness (Agape). The authors found a negative relationship between respect and the game-playing love style (Ludus) as well as the sexual attitudes of permissiveness and instrumentality.

These findings suggest that respect is indeed an important part of romantic relationships. Because the area of respect is just beginning to receive attention in the literature, the relationship between conflict and respect has not been assessed. Perhaps, level of respect toward partner influences the strategy chosen to deal with conflict. This relationship between conflict styles and respect was examined in the current studies.

Commitment

Commitment is another area that has received little attention in relation to conflict. According to Lund (1985), commitment is defined as one’s intention to continue a particular relationship. Commitment is future-oriented unlike love which takes a more

present, temporal focus. Commitment is more likely to be found in later stages of a romantic relationship rather than in early stages. Lund was interested in the distinction between love and commitment and developed measures of both commitment and investment. Lund examined the romantic relationships of college students before and after graduation to determine which variables best predicted dissolution of the relationship. She found that investment increased commitment and that this relationship predicted relationship continuation. Specifically, individuals who were neither invested in nor committed to the relationship were more likely to have broken up after graduation when compared to individuals high in investment and commitment. These results suggest that both commitment and investment are important to whether a relationship continues or is terminated.

At least one study has examined conflict and commitment. Specifically, Stanley, Markman, and Whitton (2002) investigated the relationship between conflict (i.e., withdrawal), communication, commitment, and relationship satisfaction in marital relationships. This data was collected as part of a larger telephone survey. The authors found that males reported withdrawing from conflict more often than women and that how couples argue is more predictive of divorce potential than the topic of the conflict. Negative interactions between partners were predictive of divorce potential as well. In addition, individuals who were high in commitment were less likely to report considering finding alternative partners, were less likely to report feeling trapped in the relationship, and were more satisfied with their romantic relationships than individuals low in commitment. No specific hypotheses regarding how conflict related to commitment were tested in this study.

Norris and Zweigenhaft (1999) examined the relationship between a personality variable, self-monitoring, and commitment and trust. Self-monitoring is related to how individuals approach their romantic relationships. Specifically, high self-monitors (i.e., individuals who use situational cues to determine their behavior) tend to be less committed to their relationships than low self-monitors. In addition, high self-monitors have more sexual partners in a given year than low self-monitors. Norris and Zweigenhaft examined compared couples who were similar in self-monitoring to couples who were dissimilar. The authors found that overall individuals paired up with partners whom were similar to themselves in terms of self-monitoring. Also, consistent with previous findings the authors found that high self-monitors were less committed to their relationships.

The relationship between commitment and other relational variables has also been studied. Sprecher (2002) examined the relationship between sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability. She found a positive relationship between sexual satisfaction and commitment, relationship satisfaction, and stability. Thus, couples who reported greater sexual satisfaction were also more satisfied overall, more committed, and reported greater stability than couples low in sexual satisfaction.

In summary, commitment seems to be more important in later rather than earlier stages of the relationship. Perhaps, commitment will be important in explaining the relationship between conflict and type of relationship (casual, serious, etc). Commitment appears to be distinct from love and also predicts relationship continuation (Lund, 1985). Commitment is related to greater sexual and relationship satisfaction as well. Thus, commitment may also be important in examining the relationship between

conflict and relationship satisfaction. Because the relationship between conflict and commitment has received so little attention, the current study explored this relationship.

Sociosexuality

Sociosexuality has received little, if any, attention in relation to conflict in romantic relationships. According to Simpson (e.g., 1998), sociosexuality involves individuals' attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality. Simpson developed a measure of sociosexuality, the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI). Individuals who score high on the SOI are considered to have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation. That is, these individuals report having a higher number of sexual partners, believe sex without love is acceptable, and report more one night stands than individuals who score low on the SOI. Those individuals who score low have a restricted orientation and report fewer sexual partners, are less likely to have one night stands, and report that sex without love is unacceptable. Research also suggests that individuals with unrestricted sociosexual orientation report a higher sex drive and higher number of lifetime sexual partners than individuals with a restricted orientation (Ostovich & Sabini, 2004). Sociosexual orientation involves how individuals approach one aspect of relationships, sexuality. Perhaps sociosexual orientation is also related to how individuals approach conflict in their romantic relationships.

Current Research

The current research was guided by several goals. First, because there are few good measures of conflict in the relationship literature, these studies guided the development of a new conflict scale, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. Additionally, the relationship between conflict and several relational variables including sexual

attitudes, communication (including self-disclosure), love attitudes, commitment, respect, and relationship satisfaction was studied. Finally, gender differences in conflict were assessed.

The research was guided by several hypotheses.

Hypotheses

Conflict and communication (H1 and H2). According to Jourard (1971), hiding information from significant others can be detrimental to relationships with those significant others. He explained that failing to disclose information could seriously affect individuals both emotionally and physically. Self-disclosure likely influences how individuals communicate in other areas, such as conflict issues. Therefore, it was predicted that self-disclosure would be positively related to constructive forms of conflict, such as compromising and giving each other a cooling off period before discussing the issue (i.e., separation). Additionally, it was expected that self-disclosure would be negatively related to destructive forms of conflict, such as dominating one's partner, avoiding the issue, and reacting angrily (i.e., interactional reactivity) during conflict. (H1)

A couple's ability to communicate about other issues related to the relationship, such as sexual issues, may also be related to how the couple handles conflict. Inability to communicate well about sexual issues can create a strain on the relationship (Cupach & Comstock, 1990). Thus, a measure of sexual self-disclosure was included in the study. Individuals who are more willing to communicate about sexual issues in their relationship most likely have good overall communication in their relationship and thus are likely to use constructive conflict strategies (e. g., compromise, separation). On the other hand, individuals who are unwilling to discuss sexual issues may tend to have poorer communication skills and thus engage in destructive conflict strategies (e. g., avoidance, interactional reactivity, domination). (H2)

Conflict and relationship satisfaction (H3). Almost all romantic couples report some degree of conflict in their relationships, but the strategy used to handle conflict is likely related to how satisfied they are in their relationship. Thus, it was expected that individuals who use constructive conflict strategies (e.g., compromise and separation) would report being more satisfied than individuals who use destructive strategies (e.g., domination, avoidance, and interactional reactivity).

Conflict and respect (H4). The relationship between conflict and respect has received little attention. Past research has demonstrated that respect for one's partner is related to positive aspects of the relationship such as love, commitment, and satisfaction (S. Hendrick & Hendrick, 2006). It was predicted that respect would be positively correlated to use of constructive conflict strategies such as compromise and separation. More specifically, individuals who have a great deal of respect for their partner would likely continue to show this respect even in conflict situations. Thus, individuals high in respect would be less likely to use strategies such as dominating their partner or showing anger (i.e., interactional reactivity) when faced with conflict. It was further predicted that respect would be negatively related to domination and interactional reactivity.

Conflict and gender (H5). Previous research has demonstrated that women tend to deal with conflict by using negative, active strategies (e.g., manipulation, criticism), whereas men tend to use positive, passive strategies such as avoidance (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988; Hojjat, 2000). Consistent with previous research, it was predicted that females would more likely endorse strategies such as domination and interactional reactivity. Additionally, it was predicted that males would more likely endorse strategies such as avoidance and separation.

Conflict and type of relationship (H6). According to Braiker and Kelley (1979), different levels of a relationship (e.g., casual dating, serious dating) are characterized by different levels of interdependence. The degree of interdependence a couple experiences is also related to a variety of other relational variables such as conflict, sexual intimacy, and love. Individuals who report casual dating are likely different from individuals who are seriously dating their romantic partner. Additionally, when conflict is experienced, casual daters would likely use different conflict strategies than individuals in serious relationships. Specifically, it was expected that casual daters would more likely use avoidance and compromise in an attempt to protect the relationship. However, individuals in a serious relationship (i.e., serious dating, engaged, married) would likely use different strategies that may include separation, collaboration, compromise, and domination. Individuals in serious relationships have spent more time together and are more aware of any incompatibilities that exist in their relationship (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). Thus, these incompatibilities likely create conflict between the couple. Because length of time in a relationship is associated with commitment, the relationship between degree of commitment and conflict was assessed. Specifically, length of relationship and commitment were tested as predictors of conflict to determine which variable accounted for more unique variance.

Conflict, communication, and relationship satisfaction (H7). The relationship between conflict, communication, and relationship satisfaction was also assessed. According to Jourard (1971) poor communication can be detrimental to the relationship. Thus, couples who are unwilling to communicate about their problems are likely to become dissatisfied with their relationship. Additionally, conflict has been considered to

stem from problems in communication (Christensen & Shenk, 1991; Ruben, 1978).

Thus, a mediational model was used in which poor communication (i.e., low levels of self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure) was expected to result in use of destructive conflict strategies that would in turn affect relationship satisfaction (i.e., individual is dissatisfied). Additionally, effective communication (i.e., high levels of self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure) should lead to constructive conflict strategies (e.g., compromise, separation) that in turn lead to higher relationship satisfaction.

Conflict and sexual attitudes (H8). The relationship between sexual attitudes and conflict has received little attention in the close relationship literature. Permissive sexual attitudes are characterized by attitudes endorsing casual sexuality. Perhaps individuals endorsing permissive attitudes do not value their relationship as much as individuals who do not believe casual sex is okay. Thus, it was predicted that permissiveness would be positively related to use of destructive means of conflict such as domination and interactional reactivity. Additionally, it was expected that permissiveness would be negatively correlated with constructive means of conflict, such as compromise and separation.

Conflict and love attitudes (H9). Previous research has demonstrated that an individual's style of loving is related to how that individual responds to conflict (Richardson et al., 1989). Consistent with past research, it was expected that Eros (passionate love) and Agape (selfless love) would be related to constructive means of dealing with conflict such as compromise and separation. Self-disclosure, commitment, and love are greatly valued by individuals high on the Eros love style. Thus, these individuals likely value their relationship and use constructive strategies when faced with

conflict with their romantic partner. Agape is a selfless love style and is characterized by commitment and personal sacrifices. Thus, individuals high on this love style also value the relationship and are willing to compromise to deal with conflict. Additionally, it was expected that Ludus (game-playing love) would be positively related to domination, avoidance, and interactional reactivity. The Ludus lover does not experience feelings of commitment and at times can seem manipulative due to the game-playing nature of this style. Thus, because commitment is low, Ludus lovers likely use less constructive means of dealing with conflict. Commitment, as a mediator, was also tested.

Conflict and sociosexuality (H10). Conflict and sociosexual orientation has received little or no attention in the close relationship literature. As previously mentioned, individuals with unrestricted sociosexual orientations report having a higher number of sexual partners, more one-night stands, and believe that sex without love is acceptable, more than individuals with restricted orientations. These latter individuals report fewer sexual partners, believe that sex without love is unacceptable, and report fewer one night stands. It was expected that unrestricted individuals would be less likely to want to preserve the relationship and thus would use destructive strategies more often when faced with conflict. Individuals with a restricted orientation are likely more committed to their relationships and were predicted to use constructive strategies more often for dealing with conflict.

Chapter II

Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to collect preliminary data for the development of a new conflict scale, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, and to determine in preliminary fashion how conflict relates to other relational variables such as love styles, satisfaction, respect, and sexual attitudes.

Method

Participants

Ninety female and 55 male undergraduates participated in Study 1. Seventy-five percent were European American, 6.2% were African American, 4.8% were of Hispanic origin, 4.8% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and the remaining participants reported “other.” These participants were enrolled in either introductory psychology or a course on close relationships. Participants were offered extra credit for participation.

Instruments

A nine-item background inventory assessing gender, age, ethnicity, extraversion, and self-esteem (C. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998) was included in Study 1. A 13-item love and relationship biography was also included. This inventory included items such as “How many times have you been in love,” “Are you in love now,” and “If you are currently involved in a romantic relationship, is your relationship a sexual relationship?” A two-item measure of investment ($\alpha = .70$) and a four-item measure of commitment ($\alpha = .88$) were also included (Lund, 1985).

Conflict. The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (Zacchilli, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2005) was used to measure conflict. This scale was designed to measure conflict

strategies employed by college students in dating relationships. The original form of the scale included four subscales: Compromise, Avoidance, Interactional Reactivity, and Emotional Reactivity. However, the analyses discussed in the results section included only Compromise which was composed of three items, Emotional Reactivity which was composed of three items, and Interactional Reactivity which included seven items.¹

Sexual attitudes. C. Hendrick, Hendrick, and Reich's (2006) Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale was used to measure general attitudes toward sexuality. The scale consists of 23 items and four subscales: Permissiveness, Communion, Birth Control, and Instrumentality. The Permissiveness subscale ($\alpha = .94$) is characterized by attitudes related to casual sexuality. The Communion subscale ($\alpha = .75$) is characterized by idealistic sexuality. The Birth Control subscale ($\alpha = .81$) is characterized by responsible sexuality. Finally, the Instrumentality subscale ($\alpha = .76$) is characterized by attitudes endorsing a self-centered, biological view of sexuality.

Perceptions of love and sex. S. Hendrick and Hendrick's (2002) Perceptions of Love and Sex Scale was used to measure how participants consider the relationship between love and sex. This scale includes 17 items and four subscales. The Love is Most Important subscale ($\alpha = .70$) includes items such as "For us, the physical aspect is a small part of the whole of our relationship" and "For us, sex is secondary to the friendship aspects of our relationship." The Sex Demonstrates Love subscale ($\alpha = .87$) includes items such as "Sex shows our love for each other." The Love Comes Before Sex subscale ($\alpha = .73$) includes items such as "For my partner and me, love came first, followed by sex." Finally, the Sex is Declining subscale ($\alpha = .59$) includes items such as "My partner and I are drifting apart and sex is declining."

Relationship satisfaction. S. Hendrick's (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) was used to examine relationship satisfaction. The RAS is a seven-item scale that provides an overall measure of relationship satisfaction. This scale is widely used in the close relationship literature and has demonstrated high reliability in other studies. The alpha for the RAS in the present study was .84.

Respect. S. Hendrick and Hendrick's (2006) Respect Scale was used to measure respect toward partner (alpha = .86) and perceived respect of partner (alpha = .88). Each of these two subscales consists of six items. This measure of respect includes six dimensions: empowerment, healing, dialogue, curiosity, attention, and self-respect. The inclusion of these six dimensions was influenced by Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2000 as cited in S. Hendrick & Hendrick) perspective on respect. Additionally, S. Hendrick and Hendrick view respect structurally as an attitude as well as having two content components. These content components include equality/mutuality and caring/supportiveness.

Love styles. C. Hendrick, Hendrick, and Dicke's (1998) Love Attitude Scale: Short Form was also included in Study 1. This scale includes six subscales with four items each. The subscales of the LAS have demonstrated high reliability in previous studies and the alphas for the present study were Ludus (game-playing love; alpha = .72), Storge (friendship love; alpha = .84), Eros (passionate love; alpha = .75), Mania (possessive, dependent love; alpha = .75), Pragma (practical love; alpha = .79), and Agape (altruistic love; alpha = .85).

Self-disclosure. Miller, Berg, and Archer's (1983) 10-item Self-disclosure Index was used to assess self-disclosure. This scale was developed to measure an individual's

tendency to disclose information to a significant other. In the present study, the romantic partner served as the significant other. The alpha for the present study was .92.

Sociosexuality. Simpson's (e.g., 1998) Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) was used to measure sociosexuality. This inventory was designed to measure individual differences in attitudes and behaviors related to engaging in casual sexual relationships. Individuals who score high on the SOI are considered to have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation. Unrestricted individuals report having a higher number of sexual partners, more one night stands, and believe that sex without love is acceptable more than individuals who score low on the SOI, who are said to have a restricted orientation. These individuals report fewer sexual partners, are less likely to have one night stands, and believe that sex without love is unacceptable. For the present research, the SOI was modified. Specifically, in Simpson's original form, items were measured on either an 8 or 9-point Likert-type scale. In the modified version, all items were measured on a 5-point scale and scores for two subscales were computed.

Self-esteem. The average of three items was used to measure self-esteem (C. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998). An example of an item from this measure was "The way I feel about myself generally is" and was rated on a scale from 0 = very happy to 4 = very unhappy. The alpha for the present study was .71.

Procedure

After signing consent forms, participants completed packets of questionnaires in groups. Participants used Scantrons to indicate the responses to each item. All participants responded to the questionnaires in the same fixed order.

Results

One hundred forty-two (97.9%) of participants reported that they were single and never married. Two participants reported being divorced and one participant was separated from partner. Fifty-five (37.9%) participants reported that their current relationship was sexual while 26 (17.9%) reported that their current relationship was not sexual. The remaining 63 participants were not currently involved in a romantic relationship. One hundred forty participants were in heterosexual relationships while four participants were in homosexual relationships.

Factor analyses using maximum likelihood with promax rotation were calculated for the 14 remaining items in the conflict scale. Results of the factor analyses revealed three preliminary subscales: Compromise, Interactional Reactivity, and Emotional Reactivity. The Compromise subscale consisted of three items and had an alpha of .91. The Interactional Reactivity subscale consisted of seven items and had an alpha of .89. The Emotional Reactivity subscale consisted of three items and had an alpha of .88. The items for each of the three subscales are shown in Table 1.

Correlations were calculated to examine the relationship between conflict and several relational variables such as love styles, respect, and relationship satisfaction. Compromise was positively related to respect for partner, perceived respect from partner, Eros, Storge, relationship satisfaction, commitment, investment, and self-disclosure. Compromise was negatively related to permissive sexual attitudes. Interactional reactivity was negatively related to respect for partner, perceived respect from partner, Eros, self-disclosure, and relationship satisfaction. This subscale was positively related to permissive sexual attitudes. Emotional reactivity was positively related to the sexual

attitude, birth control, and was negatively related to SOI attitudes. The results of these analyses may be found in Table 2.

Correlations were also calculated between the three conflict subscales. A strong negative correlation was found for compromise and interactional reactivity. Also, a moderate positive correlation was found for compromise and emotional reactivity. These correlations suggest that there is a high degree of overlap between the present conflict subscales. Interactional reactivity was not significantly related to emotional reactivity. These correlations may be found in Table 3.

Factor analyses were calculated to examine the modified version of the Simpson's Sociosexual Orientation Inventory. The best solution revealed a two factor model forming two subscales. The first factor, sociosexual behaviors, included four items and had an alpha of .72. The behavior factor included items such as number of sexual partners and number of one night stands. The second factor, sociosexual attitudes, included three items and had an alpha of .83. The attitude factor includes items such as "Casual sex is OK." The correlation between these two subscales was -.11.

Table 1

Factor Loadings for Items in Each of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale Subscales

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Compromise</i>		
	We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.	.89
	We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.	.87
	Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.	.76
<i>Interactional Reactivity</i>		
	When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.	.73
	Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.	.81
	My partner and I have frequent conflicts.	.85
	I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.	.80
	I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.	.82
	My partner and I discuss the issue quietly when we disagree. (R)	.48
	My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.	.59
<i>Emotional Reactivity</i>		
	When we argue, I am easily frustrated.	.78
	When we have conflict, I usually feel hurt.	.67
	Conflict with my partner often causes strong emotions.	.72

Table 2

Correlations between Preliminary Conflict Subscales and Relational Variables from

Study 1

	Compromise	Interactional Reactivity	Emotional Reactivity
<i>Sexual Attitudes Scale</i>			
Permissiveness	-.23*	.17*	-.05
Birth Control	.03	.07	.22*
Communion	.13	-.12	.01
Instrumentality	-.08	.10	-.08
<i>Respect</i>			
Respect for partner	.23*	-.21*	-.07
Perceived respect	.19*	-.26*	-.01
<i>Love Styles</i>			
Eros	.23*	-.26*	.07
Ludus	-.10	.09	-.03
Storge	.17*	-.16	.03
Pragma	.09	-.12	-.02
Mania	-.07	-.01	-.02
Agape	.01	.01	-.01
<i>Sociosexual Orientation Inventory</i>			
SOI Behavior	-.19*	.19*	-.04
SOI Attitudes	-.55*	.50*	-.29*

Table 2 (continued).

	Compromise	Interactional Reactivity	Emotional Reactivity
<i>Relationship Assessment Scale</i>	.25*	-.27*	.04
<i>Commitment</i>	.22*	-.15	.09
<i>Investment</i>	.19*	-.18*	.01
<i>Self-disclosure</i>	.18*	-.22*	.07
<i>Self-esteem</i>	.11	-.10	.13
<i>Perceptions of Love & Sex</i>			
Love is most important	.07	-.02	.10
Sex demonstrates love	.04	-.03	.13
Love before sex	.10	-.15	-.03
Sex is declining	-.06	.12	.09

* $p < .05$

Table 3

Correlations between Preliminary Conflict Subscales from Study 1

	Interactional Reactivity	Emotional Reactivity
Compromise	-.75**	.48**
Interactional Reactivity		-.11

** $p < .01$

Discussion

While the conflict subscales used in Study 1 were incomplete, results of the analyses indicated that the strategy an individual employs when in conflict with his or her romantic partner is related to other aspects of the relationship. It appears that using compromise as a conflict strategy is related to positive relationship qualities. Specifically, individuals who reported compromising with their partners during conflict also reported being more satisfied, more committed, and more invested in their relationship. These individuals were more likely to report attitudes of passionate love (i.e., Eros) and friendship love (i.e., Storge). Additionally, these individuals reported greater respect for partner, perceived respect from partner, and self-disclosure. Finally, individuals using compromise were more likely to have restricted sociosexual attitudes and behaviors. Thus, they were less likely to engage in casual sex or to believe that casual sex was okay.

Interactional reactivity appears to be related to negative aspects of relationship variables. For example, individuals who reported becoming verbally aggressive or angry during conflict (i.e., interactional reactivity) reported low levels of relationship satisfaction, respect for partner, perceived respect from partner, and self-disclosure. These individuals also reported more sexually permissive attitudes and unrestricted sociosexual attitudes and behaviors. Thus, these individuals were more likely to believe that casual sex was okay and were more likely to report engaging in casual sex such as one night stands.

Finally, emotional reactivity, or becoming hurt and frustrated during conflict was only related to the use of birth control and having restricted sociosexual attitudes. Thus,

individuals who were easily hurt during conflict were also more likely to report that taking responsibility for birth control was important as well as report that casual sex was not acceptable. This subscale may actually be measuring a response to conflict rather than a strategy for dealing with conflict. For example, both compromise and interactional reactivity appear to measure ways in which individuals deal with conflict in their romantic relationships. Emotional reactivity, on the other hand, may be measuring feelings that stem from conflict with one's partner. Additional studies are necessary to determine the nature of this subscale.

Due to circumstances related to the conflict scale, a second study was conducted to reexamine the conflict strategies utilized by college students in their romantic relationships. The purpose of Study 2 was to develop a stronger scale to measure relationship conflict and to determine how conflict relates to satisfaction and respect.

Note

¹ The original form of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale included 27 items and four subscales: Compromise, Avoidance, Interactional Reactivity, and Emotional Reactivity. Thirteen of these items were modified from Rahim's (1983) Organizational Conflict Inventory. In the original article, the inventory was not copyrighted. However, later, Rahim did copyright the scale. When asked for permission to use our modifications, he refused permission. The thirteen items were dropped from the analyses and a new set of items were developed.

Chapter III

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to create a scale based on theory and past research on conflict strategies to measure conflict experienced by college students in romantic relationships. Items measuring Interactional Reactivity and Emotional Reactivity were included from Study 1. Other items were written based on research demonstrating that there are five conflict strategies: Compromise, Collaboration, Avoidance, Domination, and Submission. Items measuring another strategy, Separation, were also included. Thus, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale consisted of eight potential conflict strategies.

Method

Participants

One hundred and five female and 65 male undergraduates enrolled in upper level psychology courses participated in Study 2. Sixty-eight percent were European American, 13% were of Hispanic origin, 7% were African American, 5% were Asian or Pacific Islander, and the remaining participants reported “other”.

Procedure and Instruments

After signing consent forms, participants completed packets of questionnaires in groups. Participants used Scantrons to indicate the response to each item. All participants responded to the questionnaires in the same fixed order. The questionnaires included a background inventory assessing demographics as well as measures of investment, commitment, and self-esteem used in Study 1. Participants also responded to the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale, S. Hendrick’s (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale, and S. Hendrick and Hendrick’s (2006) Respect Scale.

Results

One hundred and five participants reported that they were currently involved in a romantic relationship, and 65 participants were not currently involved in a romantic relationship. One hundred fifty-seven (92.4%) participants were single/never married, eight (4.7%) were married, three (1.8%) were divorced, and two (1.2%) were divorced but remarried. Twenty-one participants reported living with current partner. Of those individuals currently in a relationship, 56 had been with current partner for over 1 year, 28 had been with partner for 3 months to a year, 15 had been with partner 1 to 3 months, and 7 had been with partner for less than 1 month.

Factor analyses using maximum likelihood with Promax rotation were calculated for the 55 items of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. Results of the analyses revealed 7 factors: Compromise ($\alpha = .95$), Domination ($\alpha = .87$), Avoidance ($\alpha = .82$), Submission ($\alpha = .82$), Separation ($\alpha = .83$), Emotional Reactivity ($\alpha = .81$), and Interactional Reactivity ($\alpha = .82$). Six items were dropped because they did not load highly on any factor while an additional seven items were dropped because they were complex (i.e., loaded on more than one factor). Although results from Study 1 suggested that Emotional Reactivity might be a viable subscale, further analyses in Study 2 suggested otherwise. Specifically, one of the three items was complex (i.e., loaded on three factors). For this reason, the Emotional Reactivity subscale was dropped from the RPCS. Thus, 39 items remained in the scale. Items for each subscale along with factor loadings may be found in Table 4. Correlations between factors may be found in Table 5.

Correlations were calculated between each of the conflict subscales, relationship satisfaction, respect, investment, and commitment. Results revealed that using

compromise as a conflict strategy was significantly positively related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .48$), respect for partner ($r = .33$), perceived respect from partner ($r = .38$), commitment ($r = .45$), and investment ($r = .43$). All of these correlations were significant at $p < .01$. Using domination as a conflict strategy was significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction ($r = -.17$), respect for partner ($r = -.19$), and respect from partner ($r = -.16$). These correlations were significant at $p < .05$.

Interactional reactivity was significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction ($r = -.48, p < .01$), respect for partner ($r = -.29, p < .01$), respect from partner ($r = -.34, p < .05$), investment ($r = -.18$), and commitment ($r = -.21, p < .05$). Using submission was significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction ($r = -.19, p < .05$). Avoidance was significantly positively related to commitment ($r = .18, p < .05$). There were no significant findings for separation.

One-way ANOVAS were calculated to examine gender differences for each of the conflict subscales. The only significant difference was on the separation subscale. Females reported using separation more ($M = 1.96$) than males did ($M = 1.85, F(1, 168) = 4.51, p < .05$). Additionally, ANOVAS were calculated for each of the conflict subscales to examine possible differences between individuals currently involved in romantic relationships and individuals not currently involved. The only significant difference found was for compromise, $F(1, 168) = 17.79, p < .05$. Individuals who were currently involved in a romantic relationship were more likely to report using compromise ($M = 3.01$) than individuals not currently involved ($M = 2.82$).

Table 4

*Items and Factor Loadings for Each Subscale in the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale
from Study 2*

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Compromise</i>	We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.	.71
	We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.	.72
	Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.	.80
	When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.	.73
	In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.	.83
	Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.	.68
	My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.	.59
	I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.	.67
	The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.	.82
	When we disagree, we work to find a solution that satisfies both of us.	.80
	When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.	.83
	My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.	.88
We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.	.86	

Table 4 (continued).

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Compromise</i>	We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.	.87
<i>Domination</i>	When we argue or fight, I try to win.	.77
	I try to take control when we argue.	.73
	I rarely let my partner win an argument.	.68
	When we disagree, my goal is to convince my partner that I am right.	.80
	When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.	.64
	When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.	.82
<i>Avoidance</i>	My partner and I try to avoid arguments.	.70
	I avoid disagreements with my partner.	.85
	I avoid conflict with my partner.	.78
<i>Separation</i>	When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a "cooling off" period.	.65
	When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.	.88
	When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.	.82
	When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.	.70
	Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.	.53

Table 4 (continued).

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Submission</i>		
	When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.	.79
	I give in to my partner's wishes to settle arguments on my partner's terms.	.81
	Sometimes I agree with my partner just so the conflict will end.	.61
	When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner's needs rather than my own.	.56
	I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue.	.72
<i>Interactional Reactivity</i>		
	When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.	.63
	Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.	.68
	My partner and I have frequent conflicts.	.80
	I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.	.63
	I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.	.57
	My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.	.53

Table 5

Correlations between Factors of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale from Study 2

	Domination	Avoidance	Submission	Separation	Interactional Reactivity
Compromise	-.23**	-.05	-.16*	.05	-.36**
Domination		-.01	.19*	.06	.48**
Avoidance			.21**	.20*	.04
Submission				.13	.32**
Separation					.23*

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

Discussion

The primary purpose of Study 2 was to develop and administer new items for the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. The factor analyses revealed six factors: Compromise, Domination, Submission, Separation, Avoidance, and Interactional Reactivity. The compromise strategy seems to involve collaboration and negotiation between partners. Domination is characterized by one partner's attempt to win the argument, whereas submission is characterized by one partner giving in to the other partner's wishes. Separation is characterized by a cooling off period with intentions to discuss the issue later, whereas avoidance is characterized by not dealing with the conflict issue. Interactional reactivity involves anger and verbal aggression.

A second goal of Study 2 was determine how each of these conflict strategies related to relationship satisfaction, respect, commitment, and investment. Consistent with Study 1, the use of compromise as a conflict strategy was related to positive relationship qualities. Specifically, individuals who reported compromising with their partners during conflict also reported being more satisfied, more committed, and more invested than individuals who did not report using this strategy. Also, these individuals reported having a great deal of respect for their partners as well as perceiving that their partner respected them.

The use of domination, on the other hand, seems to be related to negative relationship qualities. For example, individuals who reported using this strategy were more likely to report being less satisfied as well as having little respect for their partners and perceiving that their partners did not respect them. A similar pattern was found for interactional reactivity. Individuals using this strategy were less satisfied, committed, and

invested in the relationship. These individuals also reported little respect for their partners and perceived that their partner had little respect for them. Individuals who used submission to deal with conflict were less satisfied than individuals who did not report using this strategy. Thus, although these individuals gave in to their partner during conflict, they did not seem satisfied with their relationship. Individuals who reported using avoidance as a conflict strategy reported high levels of commitment. It seems possible that these individuals use avoidance as a strategy to preserve their relationship because they want this relationship to continue. There were no significant findings for separation.

The results of Study 2 suggest that the type of conflict strategy that an individual uses is related to other relational variables such as respect and relationship satisfaction. A third study was conducted to further examine the subscales of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and to determine how these strategies relate to other relational variables.

Chapter IV

Study 3

Study 3 served two major purposes. First, data were collected on the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale so that a confirmatory factor analysis could be conducted to determine the best factor structure. Second, the relationships between conflict, communication, sex, satisfaction, and other relational variables, such as love and respect, were examined, particularly in relation to conflict.

Method

Participants

In Study 3, participants were 349 undergraduates enrolled in psychology courses. Participants were recruited through Experimentrix and received 1 credit for their introductory psychology class. Additionally, students in upper level psychology courses participated. In these cases, professors offered extra credit at their discretion.

Instruments

Participants completed a demographic and relationship biography questionnaire. The background questionnaire may be found in Appendix C. The love and relationship biography included measures of commitment (Lund, 1985), length of relationship, and frequency of contact with partner. The biography also assessed how often the participant has been in love and if the participant's current relationship is sexual. This measure may be found in Appendix D.

Relationship satisfaction. S. Hendrick's (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) was used to examine relationship satisfaction. The RAS is a seven-item scale that provides an overall measure of relationship satisfaction. This scale is widely used in the

close relationship literature and has demonstrated high reliability in other studies. The RAS may be found in Appendix E.

Love styles. C. Hendrick and Hendrick's (1998) Love Attitudes Scale: Short form was also included in Study 3. This scale has six subscales with four items each. The subscales are Ludus (game-playing love), Storge (friendship love), Eros (passionate love), Mania (possessive, dependent love), Pragma (practical love), and Agape (altruistic love). The LAS may be found in Appendix F.

Respect. S. Hendrick and Hendrick's (2006) Respect Scale was used to measure respect toward partner and perceived respect from partner. Each of these two subscales consists of six items. The scale may be found in Appendix G.

Sexual attitudes. C. Hendrick, Hendrick, and Reich's (2006) Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale was used to measure general attitudes toward sexuality. The scale consists of 23 items and four subscales: Permissiveness, Communion, Birth Control, and Instrumentality. The SAS may be found in Appendix H.

Self-disclosure. Miller, Berg, and Archer's (1983) 10-item Self-disclosure Index was used to assess self-disclosure. This scale was developed to measure an individual's tendency to disclose information to a significant other. For this study, the target person was the individual's romantic partner. The scale may be found in Appendix I.

Conflict. Two measures of conflict were included in Study 3. First, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS) was used in the current study. As determined in Study 2, the RPCS includes six subscales: Compromise, Domination, Submission, Separation, Avoidance, and Interactional Reactivity. The scale consists of 39 items with 3 additional items that were part of the emotional reactivity scale from Study 1. These three items

were not used in any analyses in Study 3. The Romantic Partner Conflict Scale may be found in Appendix J.

The Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale (ESCT; Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988) was used in Study 3. The conflict tactics scale includes three subscales: integrative tactics, distributive tactics, and avoidance tactics. Integrative tactics are constructive and involve compromise, collaboration, and sharing of information. An example of an integrative item is “I calmly discussed the issue.” Distributive tactics are destructive and include sarcasm and anger. An example of a distributive item is “I shouted at him/her.” Finally, avoidance tactics include shifting topics or denying that the conflict is present. An example of an avoidance item is “I tried to change the subject.” For Study 3, only the self-reported measure of the participant’s own conflict strategies was included. This scale was included for the purpose of validating the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. Specifically, correlations between subscales from both conflict scales were calculated to determine how the subscales are related. The Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale may be found in Appendix K.

Sexual communication. Catania’s (e.g., 1998) Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale (DSC) was used to measure individuals’ perceptions of communication processes involving sexual issues with their partner. This scale includes 13 items and has demonstrated high reliability in previous research ($\alpha = .81$). The DSC has been used to discriminate individuals reporting sexual problems from those not reporting sexual problems. An example of an item from this scale is “My partner rarely responds when I want to talk about our sex life.” The scale may be found in Appendix L.

Sociosexuality. Simpson's (e.g., 1998) Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) was used to measure sociosexuality. This inventory was designed to measure individual differences in attitudes and behaviors related to engaging in casual sexual relationships. In Study 1, two factors emerged from this scale: Sociosexual Attitudes and Sociosexual Behaviors. High scorers on this scale are said to have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation while low scorers are said to have a restricted sociosexual orientation. The scale may be found in Appendix M.

Esteem. Three measures of self-esteem were included in Study 3. Rosenberg's (1965; Crandal, 1973; Wylie, 1974) Self-Esteem Scale was included. This scale is a ten-item measure of general feelings toward the self. An example of an item from this scale is "I am able to do things as well as most other people." This scale may be found in Appendix N. Additionally, Robins, Hendin, and Trzesniewski's (2001) Single-Item Measure of Self-Esteem was used. This item provides a global measure of self-esteem. This scale is item number 212 in Appendix N. Finally, a three item measure of self-esteem often used in close relationship studies was included (e.g., C. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998). This measure has shown good reliability in previous studies. These three items include items # 5 and 6 in Appendix C and item # 211 in Appendix N. An example of an item from this measure is "The way I feel about myself generally is." These items are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Procedure

Prior to completing the packet of questionnaires, participants read and signed the consent form (See Appendix B). Participants completed the packet of questionnaires which were in a fixed order. Once the participants were finished, the research assistant

gave them a written debriefing form (See Appendix O) which included contact information for counseling centers on campus.

Results

Overview of Analyses

The results are reported in several steps. First, results of the data screening for adherence to statistical assumptions are reported. Second, demographic and background information is reported. Third, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis on the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS) are reported including fit indices, factor correlations, and the standardized loadings. Factors were allowed to correlate and multiple models were tested to determine the best fitting model. Fourth, the results of each of the hypotheses are discussed. For example, correlations were calculated between conflict and the relational variables as well as the subscales of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and the subscales of the Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale (ESCT; Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988). Also, ANOVAs were calculated to examine gender differences and relationship status differences in conflict strategies. Hierarchical regression analyses were calculated to test mediational models. Fifth, other interesting analyses not directly related to the hypotheses are reported. In particular, exploratory regression analyses predicting conflict strategies were conducted. Finally, the results of correlational analyses including all relational variables are discussed. This correlation table may be found in Table 11. When examining the means in the analyses, note that the majority of scales ranged from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5). For three measures (i.e., RAS, SOI attitudes, and commitment), the scales were in the opposite direction. That is, the scales ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). For

these scales, the scores were reversed so to conform to the direction of the other scales.

All scales were scored to range from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

Therefore lower numbers mean more of that quality.

Data Screening

Prior to running the primary analyses, the data was screened for missing values, inaccurate data entry, outliers, and adherence to assumptions of regression analyses and ANOVA. In addition to boxplots, an absolute z-score of ± 3.29 was used to determine if there were any univariate outliers (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). A total of seven cases had z-scores that met the criteria for being an outlier. Of those seven cases, four cases had outliers on two or more variables. Cook's distance and studentized residuals were examined to determine if any of these cases could be considered influential data points (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). One case could be considered an influential data point since the studentized residual was greater than 2.0 (i.e., 3.13) and the case had a Cook's distance of .152. In addition, this case met the criteria for multivariate outliers with a Mahalanobis distance of 40.06. Because this case is considered an influential data point, it was dropped from all subsequent analyses (reducing the total N to 349) while the other outliers were retained. Analyses with and without the other six outliers were conducted. Because there were no changes in the results, only analyses including the outliers are reported.

A missing value analysis was conducted to determine the percentage of missing cases in the data set. For all measures, the loss of data was less than 5%. Cases with missing variables were excluded from analyses including those variables for which data were missing.

To test the assumption of normality, histograms as well as the kurtosis and skewness indices were examined for values greater than ten and three respectively. None of the variables had values that exceeded the cutoff for kurtosis and skewness, so the assumption of normality was met. To test for multicollinearity, a regression analysis was calculated as were correlations between all variables. All variables were included in the regression, suggesting that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated. Additionally, no correlation was greater than .85. According to Kline (2005), a correlation greater than .85 suggests a violation of multicollinearity. Finally, heteroscedasticity did not appear problematic. The plot of predicted and residual values demonstrated a linear distribution of errors.

Demographic and Relationship Background Data

In Study 3, participants included 226 females and 123 males. In regards to ethnicity, 242 participants (69.3%) in the sample were European American, 12.9% were Hispanic, 6.3% were African American, and 2.9% were Asian/Pacific Islander. The majority of the sample (85%) was 22 years of age or younger while 12.3% were ages 23 to 30. Of those participating, 191 individuals were currently involved in a romantic relationship while 156 were not currently involved. Of those in a romantic relationship, 165 reported that they did not live with their partners, and 37 did live with their romantic partners. Additionally, 164 participants were casually dating their partners and 153 reported serious dating. Thirteen participants were engaged, ten were married, and six were divorced. Romantic relationships ranged from one month or less (3.7%) to over one year (29.2%). Also, 166 participants reported that their relationships were sexual while

40 participants reported that their relationships were not sexual. The majority of individuals ($n = 201$) reported that they were in heterosexual relationships.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis on RPCS

Confirmatory factor analyses using EQS-6.1 were conducted on the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale (RPCS) to test 2, 3, 5, and 6 factor models. The two-factor model tested constructive versus destructive strategies. The three factor model used Canary et al.'s (1988) three strategies as a guide (i.e, avoidance, integrative, distributive). The five-factor model included all of the original subscales of the RPCS except interactional reactivity that correlated moderately with other subscales. Fit indices for each of these models may be found in Table 6. Results indicated that the six-factor model including Compromise ($\alpha = .96$), Avoidance ($\alpha = .84$), Domination ($\alpha = .91$), Submission ($\alpha = .88$), Separation ($\alpha = .89$), and Interactional Reactivity ($\alpha = .88$) produced the best fitting model, although fit was only slightly better than for the five-factor model. Despite the fact that the five-factor model had relatively good fit indices, the six-factor model was adopted because Studies 1 and 2 indicated that Interactional Reactivity was a viable subscale. Factor correlations between the six subscales may be found in Table 7. Additionally, items in each subscale, along with standardized loadings, may be found in Table 8.

Correlations between subscales of the RPCS and the Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale (ESCT; Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988) were calculated to examine the relationships between these two measures of conflict strategies. Compromise was significantly and strongly positively correlated with integrative tactics ($r = .51$). Compromise was significantly negatively correlated with avoidance ($r = -.38$) and

distributive tactics ($r = -.37$). Both interactional reactivity and domination were strongly correlated with distributive tactics ($r = .63$ and $r = .60$ respectively). Perhaps, domination and interactional reactivity could both be considered types of distributive tactics.

Interestingly, the avoidance subscale of the RPCS and the avoidance subscale of the ESCT scale shared a small, although significant, correlation ($r = .16$). Perhaps, the two subscales are not measuring the same aspect of avoidance. Although there are several strong correlations between subscales, the RPCS does seem to measure some strategies that the ESCT scale does not. All correlations between the two conflict scales may be found in Table 9.

Table 6

Fit Indices for 2, 3, 5, and 6 Factor Models of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

	Chi square (df)	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
6 factor	1697.78 (687)	.90	.06	.06
5 factor	1322.38 (485)	.89	.06	.07
3 factor	1604.68(374)	.83	.10	.10
2 factor	4674.58 (701)	.59	.17	.14

Note: CFI = Comparative fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation,

SRMR = Standardized root mean squared residual

Table 7

Correlations Between Factors of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale From Study 3

	Domination	Avoidance	Submission	Separation	Interactional Reactivity
Compromise	-.28*	-.01	-.36*	.02	-.47*
Domination		-.12*	.14*	.20*	.57*
Avoidance			.21*	-.05	-.14*
Submission				.11*	.43*
Separation					.23*

* $p < .05$

Table 8

*Items and Standardized Loadings for Each Subscale in the Romantic Partner Conflict**Scale From Confirmatory Factor Analysis in Study 3*

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Compromise</i>	We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.	.82
	We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.	.72
	Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.	.78
	When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.	.76
	In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.	.84
	Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.	.68
	My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.	.69
	I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.	.65
	The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.	.73
	When we disagree, we work to find a solution that satisfies both of us.	.85
	When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.	.87
My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.	.90	

Table 8 (continued).

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
	We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.	.89
	We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.	.84
<i>Avoidance</i>		
	My partner and I try to avoid arguments.	.60
	I avoid disagreements with my partner.	.87
	I avoid conflict with my partner.	.95
<i>Interactional Reactivity</i>		
	When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.	.69
	Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.	.80
	My partner and I have frequent conflicts.	.79
	I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.	.79
	I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.	.78
	My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.	.67
<i>Separation</i>		
	When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a “cooling off” period.	.81
	When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.	.83
	When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.	.77
	When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.	.79

Table 8 (continued).

Subscale	Item	Factor loading
<i>Domination</i>	Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.	.78
	When we argue or fight, I try to win.	.82
	I try to take control when we argue.	.85
	I rarely let my partner win an argument.	.76
	When we disagree, my goal is to convince my partner that I am right.	.80
	When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.	.84
<i>Submission</i>	When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.	.75
	When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.	.77
	I give in to my partner's wishes to settle arguments on my partner's terms.	.87
	Sometimes I agree with my partner just so the conflict will end.	.70
	When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner's needs rather than my own.	.77
	I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue.	.81

Table 9

Correlations Between Subscales of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics scale

	Integrative	Avoidance	Distributive
Compromise	.51**	-.38**	-.37**
Avoidance	.18**	.16**	-.11**
Interactional Reactivity	-.35**	.42**	.63**
Domination	-.39**	.39**	.60**
Submission	-.11*	.36**	.25**
Separation	-.05	.18*	.15**

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

Tests of Hypotheses

Several analyses were conducted to examine the ten hypotheses. The results of each of these analyses will be discussed below.

Correlational Analyses

As an initial step in testing the hypotheses, correlations were calculated between the conflict strategies of the RPCS and all of the relational variables (e.g., relationship satisfaction, love styles, respect, self-disclosure). All correlations may be found in Table 10. Hypothesis 1 predicted that self-disclosure would be positively related to constructive conflict strategies such as compromise and separation. Additionally, it was predicted that self-disclosure would be negatively related to destructive conflict strategies such as domination, avoidance, and interactional reactivity. Correlational analyses testing Hypothesis 1 indicated that self-disclosure was significantly positively related ($r = .43$) to compromise, suggesting that individuals who were more willing to share intimate information with their partner were also more likely to use compromise when faced with conflict with their partner. Additionally, as predicted, self-disclosure was significantly, but weakly, negatively related to domination ($r = -.12$) and submission ($r = -.15$). Therefore, individuals reporting low self-disclosure were more likely to dominate their partner or give in to their partner when faced with conflict. Contrary to prediction, self-disclosure was not significantly related to separation, avoidance, or interactional reactivity.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that willingness to communicate about sexual issues would be related to constructive strategies such as compromise and separation. Additionally, it was predicted that individuals who were unwilling to discuss sexual

issues would report using destructive conflict strategies. Results testing Hypothesis 2 indicated that sexual communication was significantly positively related to use of compromise ($r = .21$). Thus, individuals who were able to openly communicate about sexual issues in their relationships were more likely to use compromise when faced with conflict with their romantic partners. Also, sexual communication was significantly, although weakly, negatively related to use of some of the destructive conflict strategies such as interactional reactivity ($r = -.11$), avoidance ($r = -.14$), and submission ($r = -.15$). Therefore, individuals who were unwilling to communicate about sexual issues in their relationships were more likely to avoid conflict with their partner, give in to their partner, or use verbal abuse when faced with conflict.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that individuals who used constructive conflict strategies (e.g., compromise, separation) would report high levels of relationship satisfaction while individuals who used destructive strategies (e.g., domination, interactional reactivity) would report low levels of satisfaction. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, relationship satisfaction (the RAS) was significantly positively related to use of compromise as a conflict strategy ($r = .51$). Thus, individuals who used compromise when faced with conflict with their partners were more satisfied with their romantic relationships. Also, consistent with predictions, relationship satisfaction was significantly negatively related to interactional reactivity ($r = -.37$), domination ($r = -.16$), and submission ($r = -.24$). Thus, individuals who were more verbally abusive and reported more frequent conflict, dominated their partners, or gave in to their partners when faced with conflict were less satisfied with their romantic relationships.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that individuals high in respect for partner and that perceived that their partner respected them would be less likely to use destructive strategies when faced with conflict. Thus, these individuals reporting high levels of respect would be more likely to use constructive strategies. Results testing Hypothesis 4 revealed that both respect for partner and perceived respect from partner were significantly positively related to compromise ($r = .64$ and $r = .66$, respectively). Therefore, individuals who used compromise when faced with conflict with their romantic partners had more respect for their partners and felt that their partners respected them. Interestingly, respect for partner was also significantly, although weakly, positively related to avoidance ($r = .11$). Individuals who respected their partners appeared more likely to avoid discussing conflict with their partners so as not to show disrespect for them. Also, consistent with predictions, respect for partner and perceived respect from partner were significantly negatively related to interactional reactivity ($r = -.37$ and $r = -.47$, respectively), domination ($r = -.23$ and $r = -.21$, respectively), and submission ($r = -.18$ and $r = -.30$, respectively). Therefore, individuals who used verbal abuse, dominated their partners, or gave in to their partners when faced with conflict, experienced less respect for their partners and perceived little respect from them.

Because Hypotheses 8, 9, and 10 were tested using correlational analyses, the results of these hypotheses will be discussed next. Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 were tested using different statistical approaches such as ANOVA and regression. The results of the tests of these hypotheses will follow the discussion of Hypotheses 8, 9, and 10.

Hypothesis 8 included predictions involving the relationship between permissive sexual attitudes and conflict strategies. Specifically, Hypothesis 8 stated that

permissiveness would be positively related to destructive conflict strategies such as domination and interactional reactivity. Additionally, it was expected that permissiveness would be negatively related to compromise and separation. As predicted, compromise was significantly negatively related to permissiveness ($r = -.13$). Thus, individuals who held attitudes that casual sex is ok were slightly less likely to use compromise when faced with conflict than individuals who did not hold permissive attitudes. Also, as predicted, permissiveness was significantly positively related to destructive conflict strategies such as domination ($r = .27$) and interactional reactivity ($r = .23$). Thus, individuals who held permissive sexual attitudes were more likely to report dominating their partners and using verbal abuse when faced with conflict. Contrary to prediction, permissiveness was also significantly, although weakly, positively related to separation ($r = .12$).

Hypothesis 9 included predictions of the relationships between love styles and conflict strategies. Specifically, it was predicted that Eros and Agape would be positively related to compromise and separation. Ludus was expected to be positively related to domination, interactional reactivity, and avoidance. Consistent with previous research, the love style Eros was significantly positively related to compromise ($r = .48$). Therefore, individuals who had passionate love for their partners were more likely to use compromise when faced with conflict with their partners. Eros was significantly negatively correlated to destructive conflict styles such as interactional reactivity ($r = -.23$) and domination ($r = -.17$). Agape, or selfless love, was significantly positively related to compromise ($r = .25$) and significantly negatively related to domination ($r = -.15$). Consistent with predictions, Ludus (game-playing love) was significantly,

positively related to domination ($r = .39$) and interactional reactivity ($r = .36$) and significantly negatively related to compromise ($r = -.27$). Interestingly, the other three love styles were found to have significant relationships with conflict strategies different from previous research (Richardson et al, 1989) that did not find such relationships. For example, Storge (friendship love) was significantly positively related to compromise ($r = .23$) and significantly negatively related to interactional reactivity ($r = -.14$). Pragma, or practical love, was significantly positively related to compromise ($r = .19$). Pragma was also significantly positively related to avoidance ($r = .12$) which was consistent with Richardson et al.'s research. Finally, Ludus (game-playing love) was significantly positively related to both domination ($r = .30$) and submission ($r = .28$).

Hypothesis 10 stated that individuals with unrestricted sociosexual attitudes and behaviors would more likely report using destructive conflict strategies. Individuals with restricted sociosexual attitudes and behaviors were expected to use constructive conflict strategies. Contrary to predictions in Hypothesis 10, sociosexual behaviors were not significantly related to any of the conflict strategies. Sociosexual attitudes, on the other hand, were significantly related to interactional reactivity ($r = .23$), submission ($r = .20$), and domination ($r = .14$). These relationships suggest that individuals with unrestricted sociosexual attitudes (i.e., "casual sex is ok") were more likely to give in to their partners, dominate their partners, and become verbally abusive when faced with conflict with their partners. Thus, as expected, individuals who had unrestricted sociosexual orientations, particularly attitudes, were more likely to use destructive conflict strategies than individuals with restricted sociosexual orientations.

Table 10

Correlations Between Subscales of Romantic Partner Conflict Scale and Relational Variables

	Compromise	Avoidance	Interactional Reactivity	Separation	Domination	Submission
Rosenberg self-esteem	.37**	-.09	-.27**	-.09	-.18**	-.23**
3 item self- esteem	.38**	-.05	-.23**	-.06	-.14**	-.20**
1 item self- esteem	.24**	.09	-.16**	.06	.11*	.13*
RAS	.51**	.03	-.37**	-.08	-.16**	-.24**
<i>Love styles</i>						
Eros	.48**	.03	-.23**	-.08	-.17**	-.13
Ludus	-.27**	-.01	.36**	.09	.39**	.09
Storge	.23**	.05	-.14**	-.01	-.08	-.08
Pragma	.19**	.12*	-.03	.01	-.06	.02
Mania	-.10	-.06	.35**	.04	.30**	.28**
Agape	.25**	.09	-.01	-.02	-.15**	.20**
Respect	.64**	.11*	-.37**	.00	-.23**	-.18**
Perceived respect	.66**	.08	-.47**	-.02	-.21**	-.30**
Commit	.35**	-.03	-.27**	-.14**	-.14*	-.19**
Self- Disclosure	.43**	-.01	-.10	.00	-.12*	-.15**
Sexual com	.21**	-.14*	-.11*	.07	.07	-.15**

Table 10 (continued)

	Compromise	Avoidance	Interactional Reactivity	Separation	Domination	Submission
<i>SAS</i>						
Permissive	-.13*	-.02	.23**	.12*	.27**	.11
Birth	.06	-.02	.00	.07	.02	-.04
Commun	.18**	.02	.06	.02	.07	-.03
Instrument	-.11*	.08	.23**	.07	.24**	.12*
<i>SOI</i>						
SOI behavior	-.07	-.05	.00	-.02	.08	-.02
SOI attitude	-.08	-.01	.23**	-.06	.14*	.20**

Note: RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale, Commit = Commitment, Sexual Com = Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale, SAS = Sexual Attitudes Scale, Permissive = Permissiveness, Birth = Birth Control, Commun = Communion, Instrument = Instrumentality, SOI = Sociosexual Orientation Index, 3 item self-esteem = (e.g., C. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998), 1 item self-esteem = (Robins et al.'s, 2001 Single-Item Measure of Self-Esteem)

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

Gender Differences in Conflict Strategies

Hypothesis 5 predicted gender differences in conflict strategies. Specifically, it was expected that females would endorse strategies such as interactional reactivity and domination, and males would endorse strategies such as avoidance and separation. One-way ANOVAs were calculated to examine gender differences in conflict strategies.

There were no significant differences in compromise, avoidance, or separation.

However, there were significant differences for the other three subscales. Contrary to prediction of Hypothesis 5, males reported using interactional reactivity ($M = 2.42, SD = .84$) as a conflict strategy more than females ($M = 2.75, SD = .97$), $F(1, 343) = 9.70, p < .05$. Thus, males were more likely to use verbal abuse when faced with conflict with their romantic partners. Also, contrary to the prediction of Hypothesis 5, males reported using domination ($M = 2.00, SD = .87$) more than females ($M = 2.36, SD = .99$), $F(1, 346) = 11.71, p < .05$. Thus, males were more likely than females to push their partners when faced with conflict. Interestingly, males also reported using submission ($M = 2.11, SD = .84$) as a conflict strategy more than females ($M = 2.52, SD = .88$), $F(1, 345) = 18.93, p < .05$. Therefore, males were more likely than females to give in to their partners when faced with conflict.

Relationship Status Differences in Conflict

Hypothesis 6 predicted differences in conflict strategies based on relationship status. In particular, it was predicted that casual daters would more likely use compromise or avoidance. Also, serious daters were expected to use separation, domination, and interactional reactivity. One-way ANOVAs were calculated to examine relationship status (i.e., casual vs. serious dating) differences in conflict strategies. There

were no significant differences in avoidance, domination, or submission. Contrary to the prediction of Hypothesis 6, serious daters reported using compromise ($M = .96, SD = .81$) more than casual daters ($M = 1.32, SD = .77$), $F(1, 343) = 31.36, p < .05$. Perhaps, serious daters felt they had more to lose due to the serious nature of the relationship and were more willing to compromise to preserve the relationship. Casual daters reported using interactional reactivity ($M = 2.44, SD = .88$) more than serious daters ($M = 2.81, SD = .97$), $F(1, 341) = 18.04, p < .05$. Casual daters also reported using separation ($M = 1.67, SD = .80$) more than serious daters ($M = 2.08, SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 344) = 9.82, p < .05$. Casual daters may be more willing to express anger when faced with conflict because they do not feel the need to preserve the relationship. Casual daters may also be more willing than serious daters to cool off before attempting to resolve the conflict issue with their partner.

One-way ANOVAs were also calculated to examine whether individuals in a relationship reported differences in conflict strategies in comparison to individuals not in a relationship. In the instructions, participants were asked to report on their current relationship. If the participants were not currently involved in a romantic relationship, they were asked to respond based on their most recent relationship. Finally, if the participant had never been in a romantic relationship, they were asked to respond based on how they think they would respond if they had been in romantic relationship. Thus, it was important to examine potential differences between individuals currently and not currently involved. There were no significant differences in avoidance or domination. However, individuals in a relationship reported using compromise ($M = .92, SD = .77$) more than individuals not currently in a relationship ($M = 1.38, SD = .79$), $F(1, 343) =$

31.36, $p < .05$. Individuals not in a relationship reported using interactional reactivity ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 2.8$) more than individuals in a relationship ($M = 2.83$, $SD = .90$), $F(1, 341) = 18.04$, $p < .05$. The same pattern emerged for separation and submission. Individuals not in a relationship reported using separation ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 1.00$) more than individuals in a relationship ($M = 2.07$, $SD = .80$), $F(1, 344) = 9.82$, $p < .05$. Individuals not currently involved also reported using submission ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .90$) more than individuals currently involved in a relationship ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .83$), $F(1, 343) = 14.78$, $p < .05$. Because individuals not currently involved were thinking of past relationships, the retrospective nature of the task may have influenced these differences.

Conflict as a Mediator of Self-disclosure and Satisfaction

Hypothesis 7 predicted a mediational model in which poor communication (i.e., low levels of self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure) was expected to result in use of destructive strategies that would in turn result in relationship dissatisfaction. First, multiple regression analyses were calculated to examine conflict as a mediator of the relationship between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction. Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedures were used to test each of the mediational models. These procedures include testing if the initial variable (self-disclosure) is correlated with the outcome variable (satisfaction) at Step 1, testing if the initial variable is correlated with the mediator (conflict) at Step 2, showing that the mediator influences the outcome variable at Step 3, and using a Sobel test to test the significance of the mediational model at Step 4. Six mediational analyses were calculated to examine each conflict style separately as a mediator of the relationship between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction. As suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), the first regression analysis examined self-

disclosure as a predictor of relationship satisfaction. This model was significant, $F(1, 336) = 66.59, p < .05$ and accounted for 16.5% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. Self-disclosure ($b = .407, t = 8.16, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of satisfaction, suggesting that willingness to disclose information to partner was predictive of satisfaction with relationship.

For the first test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **compromise** (Step 2). The model was significant, $F(1, 345) = 91.02, p < .05$. This model accounted for 21% of the variance in conflict strategy and self-disclosure ($b = .457, t = 9.54, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of compromise. For Step 3, self-disclosure and compromise were used as simultaneous predictors of relationship satisfaction. This model was significant, $F(2, 333) = 73.67, p < .05$ and the model accounted for 30.6% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. Both compromise ($b = .420, t = 8.19, p < .05$) and self-disclosure ($b = 2.16, t = 4.22, p < .05$) were significant predictors. A Sobel test was used to test if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was significant, $z = 6.26, p = .00$, suggesting that compromise was a mediator of the relationship between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction.

For the second test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **avoidance**. The model was not significant, $F(1, 346) = .236, p = .627$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between self-disclosure and avoidance, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation of avoidance to the relationship between self-disclosure and satisfaction.

For the third test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **interactional reactivity**. This model was not significant, $F(1, 334) = 1.99, p = .159$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between self-disclosure and interactional reactivity, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation of interactional reactivity to the relationship between self-disclosure and satisfaction.

For the fourth test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **separation**. This model was not significant, $F(1, 347) = 1.99, p = .570$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between self-disclosure and separation, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation of separation to the relationship between self-disclosure and satisfaction.

For the fifth test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **domination**. This model was not significant, $F(1, 347) = 2.87, p = .091$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between self-disclosure and domination, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation of domination to the relationship between self-disclosure and satisfaction.

Finally, for the sixth test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine self-disclosure as a predictor of **submission**. The model was significant, $F(1, 346) = 5.11, p < .05$. This model accounted for only 1.5% of the variance in submission and self-disclosure ($b = -.121, t = -2.96, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of submission. For Step 3, self-disclosure and submission were used as

simultaneous predictors of relationship satisfaction. This model was significant, $F(2, 334) = 40.73, p < .05$ and the model accounted for 19.6% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. Both submission ($b = -.181, t = -3.53, p < .05$) and self-disclosure ($b = .492, t = 7.81, p < .05$) were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction. A Sobel test was used to test if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was not significant ($z = 1.91, p > .056$) and thus submission as a mediator of self-disclosure and satisfaction was not met.

Conflict as a Mediator of Sexual Communication and Satisfaction

As a further test of Hypothesis 7, multiple regression analyses were calculated to examine conflict as a mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction. As before, Baron and Kenny's (1986) procedures were used to test each of the mediational models. Six mediational analyses were calculated to examine each conflict style separately as a mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction. As suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), the first regression analysis (Step 1) examined sexual communication as a predictor of relationship satisfaction. This model was significant, $F(1, 330) = 30.27, p < .05$. This model accounted for 10.6% of the variance in satisfaction and sexual communication ($b = .326, t = 6.27, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of satisfaction.

For the first test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **compromise** (Step 2). This model was significant, $F(1, 340) = 12.80, p < .05$. Sexual communication ($b = .190, t = 3.58, p < .05$) was a significant predictor and accounted for 3.6% of the variance in compromise. For Step 3, sexual communication and compromise were used as simultaneous predictors

of relationship satisfaction. The model was significant, $F(2, 328) = 74.57, p < .05$. Both compromise ($b = .461, t = 9.89, p < .05$) and sexual communication ($b = .241, t = 5.17, p < .05$) were significant predictors and accounted for 31.3% of the variance in satisfaction. A Sobel test was calculated to determine if the mediational model was significant. The Sobel test statistic was significant ($z = 3.39, p < .001$) suggesting that compromise mediates the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction.

For the second test of mediation, a regression analysis was conducted to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **avoidance**. This model was significant, $F(1, 340) = 7.38, p < .05$. Sexual communication ($b = -.146, t = -2.72, p < .05$) was a significant predictor and accounted for 2.1% of the variance in avoidance. For Step 3, sexual communication and avoidance were used as simultaneous predictors of relationship satisfaction. This model was significant, $F(2, 328) = 22.54, p < .05$. Both sexual communication ($b = .349, t = 6.65, p < .05$) and avoidance ($b = .105, t = 2.00, p < .05$) were significant predictors and accounted for 12.1% of the variance in satisfaction. A Sobel test was calculated to determine if the mediational model was significant. The Sobel test statistic was not significant ($z = -.204, p = .839$) suggesting that avoidance does not mediate the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction.

For the third test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **interactional reactivity**. The model was significant, $F(1, 337) = 4.50, p < .05$. Sexual communication ($b = -.115, t = -2.12, p < .05$) was a significant predictor and accounted for only 1.3% of the variance in interactional reactivity. For Step 3, sexual communication and interactional reactivity were used as simultaneous predictors of relationship satisfaction. The model was

significant, $F(2, 325) = 43.84, p < .05$. Both sexual communication ($b = .283, t = 5.72, p < .05$) and interactional reactivity ($b = -.332, t = -6.71, p < .05$) were significant predictors and accounted for 21.2% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. A Sobel test was calculated to determine if the mediational model was significant. The Sobel test statistic was significant ($z = 2.01, p < .044$) suggesting that interactional reactivity is a mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction.

For the fourth test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **separation** (Step 2). The model was not significant, $F(1, 340) = 1.19, p = .275$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between sexual communication and separation, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation of separation to the relationship between sexual communication and satisfaction.

For the fifth test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **domination** (Step 2). The model was not significant, $F(1, 340) = 2.16, p = .143$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between sexual communication and domination was not performed to test possible mediation of domination to the relationship between sexual communication and satisfaction.

For the final test of mediation, a multiple regression analysis was calculated to examine sexual communication as a predictor of **submission** (Step 2). The model was significant, $F(1, 339) = 6.37, p < .05$. Sexual communication ($b = -.156, t = -2.90, p < .05$) was a significant predictor and accounted for 2.4% of the variance in submission. For Step 3, sexual communication and submission were used as simultaneous predictors

of relationship satisfaction. The model was significant, $F(2, 327) = 24.60, p < .05$. Both submission ($b = -.161, t = -3.08, p < .05$) and sexual communication ($b = .300, t = 5.75, p < .05$) were significant predictors and accounted for 13.1% of the variance in relationship satisfaction. A Sobel test was used to test the significance of the mediational model. The Sobel test statistic was significant ($z = 2.13, p < .033$) suggesting that submission is a mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and satisfaction.

Commitment as a Mediator of Love Styles and Compromise

A second implicit goal of Hypothesis 9 was to test commitment as a mediator of love styles and conflict. It seems that commitment is an important part of at least some of the love styles and thus may mediate the relationship between love and conflict. Only two conflict strategies were correlated moderately strongly with the love styles. In particular, compromise was correlated with Eros, Agape, Storge, Ludus, and Pragma. Additionally, interactional reactivity was correlated with Eros, Ludus, and Storge. Multiple regression analyses using Baron and Kenny's (1986) suggestions tested commitment as a mediator of each of these relationships. The results of the mediational analyses for compromise are discussed first.

For the first test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of **Eros** and **compromise**. For the first step, a regression analysis examined Eros as a predictor of compromise. The model was significant, $F(1, 344) = 100.80, p < .05$ and accounted for 22.7% of the variance in compromise. Eros was a significant predictor of compromise ($b = .476, t = 10.04, p < .05$). For the second step, Eros was examined as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 338) = 156.42, p < .05$ and accounted for

31.6% of the variance in commitment. At Step 3, commitment and Eros were examined as simultaneous predictors of compromise. The model was significant, $F(2, 335) = 54.42, p < .05$ and accounted for 24.5% of the variance in compromise. Both commitment ($b = .137, t = 2.39, p < .05$) and Eros ($b = .405, t = 7.06, p < .05$) were significant predictors of compromise. A Sobel test was used to test if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was not significant, $z = .216, p = .829$. Thus, commitment does not appear to be a mediator of the relationship between Eros and compromise.

In the second test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of **Agape** and **compromise**. In Step 1, a regression analysis examined Agape as a predictor of compromise. The model was significant, $F(1, 346) = 26.64, p < .05$ and accounted for 7.1% of the variance in compromise. Agape was a significant predictor of compromise ($b = .267, t = 5.16, p < .05$). In Step 2, Agape was examined as a predictor of commitment. This model was significant, $F(1, 339) = 20.09, p < .05$ and accounted for 5.6% of the variance in commitment. In Step 3, Agape and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of compromise. The model was significant, $F(2, 336) = 33.32, p < .05$ and accounted for 16.6% of the variance in compromise. Both Agape ($b = .188, t = 3.66, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = .319, t = 6.23, p < .05$) were significant predictors of compromise. A Sobel test was used to test if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test was significant, $z = 3.16, p < .00$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Agape and compromise.

In the third test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of the relationship between **Storge** and **compromise**. At Step 1, the regression analysis

examined Storge as a predictor of compromise. The model was significant, $F(1, 344) = 22.02, p < .05$ and accounted for 6% of the variance in compromise. Storge was a significant predictor of compromise ($b = .246, t = 4.70, p < .05$). At Step 2, the regression analysis examined Storge as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 338) = 15.05, p < .05$ and accounted for 4.3% of the variance in commitment. Storge was a significant predictor of commitment ($b = .206, t = 3.88, p < .05$). At Step 3, Storge and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of compromise. The model was significant, $F(2, 335) = 32.90, p < .05$ and accounted for 16.4% of the variance in compromise. Both Storge ($b = .183, t = 3.56, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = .326, t = 6.38, p < .05$) were significant predictors of compromise. A Sobel test was used to test if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was significant, $z = 3.36, p < .00$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Storge and compromise.

In the fourth test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of the relationship between **Ludus** and **compromise**. At Step 1, the regression analysis examined Ludus as a predictor of compromise. The model was significant, $F(1, 345) = 23.09, p < .05$ and accounted for 6.3% of the variance in compromise. Ludus was a significant predictor of compromise ($b = -.250, t = -4.80, p < .05$). At Step 2, Ludus was examined as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 339) = 17.31, p < .05$ and accounted for 4.9% of the variance in commitment. Ludus was a significant predictor of commitment ($b = -.220, t = -4.16, p < .05$). At Step 3, Ludus and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of compromise. The model was significant, $F(2, 336) = 32.27, p < .05$ and accounted for 16% of the variance in

compromise. Both Ludus ($b = -.174, t = -3.41, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = .325, t = 6.36, p < .05$) were significant predictors of compromise. A Sobel test was used to test the significance of the mediation effect. The Sobel test statistic was significant, $z = -3.51, p < .00$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Ludus and compromise.

In the fifth test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of the relationship between **Pragma** and **compromise**. At Step 1, the regression examined Pragma as a predictor of compromise. The model was significant, $F(1, 346) = 12.06, p < .05$ and accounted for 3.4% of the variance in compromise. Pragma was a significant predictor of compromise ($b = .184, t = 3.47, p < .05$). At Step 2, Pragma was examined as a predictor of commitment. The model was not significant, $F(1, 339) = .000, p = .990$. Because the regression at Step 2 did not establish a significant relationship between Pragma and commitment, Step 3 was not performed to test possible mediation between of commitment to the relationship between Pragma and compromise.

Commitment as a Mediator of Love Styles and Interactional Reactivity

As previously mentioned, Hypothesis 9 predicted that commitment was a mediator of love styles and conflict. Interactional reactivity was correlated with Eros, Ludus, and Storge. Multiple regression analyses using Baron and Kenny's (1986) suggestions tested commitment as a mediator of each of these relationships.

In the first test of mediation, commitment was tested as a mediator of the relationship between **Eros** and **interactional reactivity**. At Step 1, the regression analysis examined Eros as a predictor of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(1, 342) = 18.72, p < .05$ and accounted for 5.2% of the variance in

interactional reactivity. Eros was a significant predictor ($b = -.228, t = -4.33, p < .05$). At Step 2, the regression examined Eros as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 338) = 156.42, p < .05$ and accounted for 31.6% of the variance in commitment. Eros was a significant predictor of commitment ($b = .562, t = 12.52, p < .05$). At Step 3, Eros and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(2, 333) = 13.64, p < .05$ and accounted for 7.6% of the variance in interactional reactivity. Both Eros ($b = -.123, t = -1.94, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = -.187, t = -2.95, p < .05$) were significant predictors. A Sobel test was used to test the significance of the mediation effect. The Sobel test statistic was significant, $z = -2.84, p < .005$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Eros and interactional reactivity.

In the second test of mediation, commitment was examined as a mediator of the relationship between **Ludus** and **interactional reactivity**. At Step 1, Ludus was examined as a predictor of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(1, 343) = 50.47, p < .05$ and accounted for 12.8% of the variance. Ludus was a significant predictor ($b = .358, t = 7.10, p < .05$). At Step 2, Ludus was examined as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 339) = 17.31, p < .05$ and accounted for 4.9% of the variance. Ludus was a significant predictor ($b = -.220, t = -4.16, p < .05$). At Step 3, Ludus and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(2, 334) = 31.82, p < .05$ and accounted for 16% of the variance. Both Ludus ($b = .316, t = 6.14, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = -.183, t = -3.55, p < .05$) were significant predictors. A Sobel test was used to examine if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was

significant, $z = 2.70$, $p < .007$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Ludus and interactional reactivity.

Finally, in the third test of mediation, commitment was examined as a mediator of the relationship between **Storge** and **interactional reactivity**. At Step 1, the regression analysis examined Storge as a predictor of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(1, 342) = 6.35$, $p < .05$ and accounted for only 1.8% of the variance in interactional reactivity. Storge was a significant predictor ($b = -.135$, $t = -2.52$, $p < .05$). At Step 2, Storge was examined as a predictor of commitment. The model was significant, $F(1, 338) = 15.05$, $p < .05$ and accounted for 4.3% of the variance in commitment. Storge was a significant predictor of commitment ($b = .206$, $t = 3.88$, $p < .05$). At Step 3, Storge and commitment were examined as simultaneous predictors of interactional reactivity. The model was significant, $F(2, 333) = 13.39$, $p < .05$ and accounted for 7.4% of the variance. Only commitment was a significant predictor ($b = -.241$, $t = -4.47$, $p < .05$). A Sobel test was used to examine if the mediation effect was significant. The Sobel test statistic was significant, $z = -2.93$, $p < .003$, suggesting that commitment was a mediator of the relationship between Storge and interactional reactivity.

Length of Relationship and Commitment Predicting Conflict

As previously mentioned, Hypothesis 6 predicted that there would be differences in conflict strategies based on relational status. A second goal of Hypothesis 6 was to examine length of relationship and commitment as predictors of conflict to determine whether one predictor accounted for more variance in conflict strategy. Simultaneous regression analyses were calculated to examine length of relationship and commitment as

predictors of each conflict strategy. For four of the six conflict strategies, both length of relationship and commitment were significantly correlated with the strategy. Therefore, regression analyses were conducted on these four strategies only. First, length of relationship and commitment were examined as predictors of **compromise**. The model was significant, $F(2, 335) = 26.71, p < .05$. The model accounted for 13.8% of the variance in compromise. Only commitment ($b = .335, t = 6.12, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of compromise. Perhaps, length of relationship is significantly correlated with compromise due to its influence on commitment. Length of relationship and commitment were also examined as predictors of **interactional reactivity**. This model was significant, $F(2, 333) = 16.23, p < .05$. This model accounted for 8.9% of the variance in this conflict strategy. Both length of relationship ($b = -.167, t = -2.95, p < .05$) and commitment ($b = -.191, t = -3.38, p < .05$) were significant predictors, with commitment only slightly better at predicting interactional reactivity. For **submission**, the model was significant, $F(2, 335) = 7.11, p < .05$. This model accounted for 4.1% of the variance in submission. Only commitment ($b = -.132, t = -2.28, p < .05$) was a significant predictor of this conflict strategy. Finally, for **separation**, the model was significant, $F(2, 336) = 3.92, p < .05$, but neither commitment nor length were significant predictors.

Exploratory Regression Analyses Predicting Conflict Strategies

Six hierarchical multiple regression analyses were calculated using relational variables to predict each of the conflict strategies from the RPCS. Only individuals currently involved in romantic relationships were included in these analyses. Because results of the one-way ANOVAs indicated that there are some gender and relationship status differences in conflict strategies, gender and relationship status (casual vs. serious

dating) were included at Step 1 of each regression analysis. Relational variables that were significantly correlated with each conflict subscale were included as predictors in the Step 2 of each analysis. This approach allows examination of which predictors are contributing unique variance to each conflict strategy.

Relationship satisfaction, commitment, self-disclosure, sexual communication, respect, perceived respect, Eros, Ludus, Storge, Pragma, Agape, permissiveness, communion, and instrumentality were significantly correlated with **compromise** and thus were included at Step 2 of this regression analysis. At Step 1, the model was significant, $F(2, 175) = 3.17, p < .05$. This model accounted for 3.5% of the variance in compromise. The relationship status variable was the only significant predictor of compromise ($b = -.184, t = -2.46, p < .05$). Thus, individuals in serious relationships reported using compromise more than individuals in casual relationships. At Step 2, the model was significant, $F(16, 161) = 10.00, p < .05$. The model at Step 2 accounted for 49.8% of the variance in compromise. At Step 2, significant predictors included respect for partner ($b = .208, t = 1.97, p < .05$), perceived respect from partner ($b = .385, t = 3.54, p < .05$), and sexual communication ($b = .195, t = 2.98, p < .05$). At Step 2, the relationship status variable was no longer a significant predictor of compromise. It appears that having respect for your partner, perceiving respect from your partner, and being able to communicate about sexual issues were predictive of use of compromise as a conflict strategy.

The only relational variables significantly correlated with **avoidance** were Pragma, sexual communication, and respect for partner and were the only variables included at Step 2. At Step 1, the model was not significant, $F(2, 183) = 1.86, p = .308$.

At Step 2, the model was significant, $F(5, 180) = 3.65, p < .05$. This model accounted for 9% of the variance in avoidance. Sexual communication ($b = -.219, t = -3.05, p < .05$) was the only significant predictor of avoidance. Thus, being unwilling to communicate about sexual issues was predictive of using avoidance.

Satisfaction, commitment, self-esteem, Eros, Ludus, Storge, respect for partner, respect from partner, sexual communication, permissiveness, instrumentality, and SOI attitudes were significantly correlated to **interactional reactivity** and were included as predictors at Step 2. At Step 1, the model was significant, $F(2, 173) = 5.78, p < .05$. This model accounted for 6.3% of the variance in interactional reactivity. The only significant predictor was gender ($b = .213, t = 2.89, p < .05$). Therefore, males were more likely to use interactional reactivity as a conflict strategy. At Step 2, the model was significant, $F(14, 161) = 11.27, p < .05$. This model accounted for 46.5% of the variance in interactional reactivity. The significant predictors included relationship satisfaction ($b = -.314, t = -2.82, p < .05$), commitment ($b = .237, t = 2.61, p < .05$), Ludus ($b = .146, t = 2.39, p < .05$), perceived respect from partner ($b = -.589, t = -5.45, p < .05$), and instrumentality ($b = .261, t = 3.90, p < .05$). Thus, having a game-playing love style, a biological view of sexuality, perceiving little respect from partner, having high commitment, and being low in relationship satisfaction was predictive of using interactional reactivity.

Commitment, satisfaction, respect for partner, perceived respect from partner, Eros, Ludus, Agape, self-disclosure, sexual communication, permissiveness, instrumentality, and SOI attitudes were significantly related to **domination** and were included as predictors at Step 2 of the regression analysis. At Step 1, the model was

significant, $F(2, 175) = 12.29, p < .05$ and the model accounted for 12.3% of the variance in domination. Both gender ($b = .267, t = 3.76, p < .05$) and relationship status ($b = .203, t = 2.86, p < .05$) were significant predictors with males and casual daters being more likely to use domination. At Step 2, the model was significant, $F(15, 162) = 4.69, p < .05$. This model accounted for 30% of the variance in domination. At Step 2, significant predictors included gender ($b = .166, t = 2.05, p < .05$), Ludus ($b = .194, t = 2.71, p < .05$), commitment ($b = .237, t = 2.34, p < .05$), and satisfaction ($b = -.255, t = -1.95, p < .05$). It appears that being male, having a game-playing love style, being committed to the relationship, and having low relationship satisfaction was predictive of using domination as a conflict strategy. Relationship status was no longer significant at Step 2.

Satisfaction, commitment, respect for partner, perceived from partner, self-esteem, Ludus, Agape, self-disclosure, sexual communication, instrumentality, and SOI attitudes were significantly correlated with **submission** and were included in Step 2 of the analysis. At Step 1, the model was significant, $F(2, 176) = 5.22, p < .05$. This model accounted for 5.6% of the variance in submission. Gender ($b = .235, t = 3.19, p < .05$) was a significant predictor at Step 1. Thus, males were more likely to use submission. At Step 2, the model was significant, $F(12, 166) = 4.24, p < .05$. This model accounted for 23.5% of the variance in submission. The significant predictors included Ludus ($b = .169, t = 2.25, p < .05$) and perceived respect from partner ($b = -.349, t = -2.64, p < .05$). Thus, having a game-playing love style and perceiving little respect from partner was predictive of giving in to the partner during conflict. Gender was no longer significant at Step 2.

The only relational variables significantly correlated with **separation** were permissiveness and commitment. These variables were included at Step 2. At Step 1 of the regression analysis, the model was not significant, $F(2, 185) = 1.21, p = .299$. Again, At Step 2, the model was not significant, $F(4, 183) = .192, p = .458$. Perhaps separation is predicted by relational variables not assessed in the current study. Further research is necessary to examine this possibility.

Correlations Between Relational Variables

Correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between all of the relational variables as well as the three self-esteem measures. While the complete table of correlations may be found in Table 11, some of the relationships will be discussed below.

First, in regards to the three self-esteem measures, it seems that both Robins et al.'s (2001) Single-Item Measure of Self-Esteem and Hendrick et al.'s (e.g., 1989) three item measure of self-esteem were strongly related to Rosenberg's (1965; Crandal, 1973; Wylie, 1974) Self-Esteem Scale ($r = .60$ and $r = .70$, respectively). Additionally, the single-item and three-item measures were strongly and positively related ($r = .67$). Despite these strong correlations between the three different measures of self-esteem, there were differences in how each measure of self-esteem related to the relational variables. For example, the Single-Item Measure of Self-Esteem was significantly related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .13$), Eros ($r = .15$), Ludus ($r = -.11$), respect ($r = .13$) and perceived respect ($r = .15$). The three-item measure was significantly related to commitment ($r = .23$), satisfaction ($r = .27$), Eros ($r = .24$), Ludus ($r = -.23$), Pragma ($r = .11$), Mania ($r = -.20$), respect ($r = .30$), perceived respect ($r = .33$), self-disclosure ($r =$

.21), and sexual communication ($r = .13$). Finally, Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale was significantly related to self-disclosure ($r = .25$), sexual communication ($r = .14$), permissiveness ($r = -.11$), commitment ($r = .18$), satisfaction ($r = .23$), Eros ($r = .20$), Ludus ($r = -.25$), Mania ($r = -.22$), respect ($r = .26$), and perceived respect ($r = .30$). Thus, the greatest similarity between the self-esteem measures in terms of relating to the relationship variables seemed to be between Hendrick et al.'s three-item measure and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. Robins et al.'s measure of self-esteem shared small relationships with only five of the relational variables. Perhaps for close relationship research, the three-item measure or the Self-Esteem Scale is more appropriate to use than the single-item measure.

Because the research on respect is in its early stages, a discussion of the relationships between respect and other relational variables is also important. Consistent with previous research by C. Hendrick and Hendrick (2006), respect for partner was related to relationship satisfaction ($r = .53$), commitment ($r = .42$), Eros ($r = .61$), Ludus ($r = -.26$), Storge ($r = .29$), Pragma ($r = .19$), Mania ($r = -.18$), and Agape ($r = .23$). Thus, individuals who respected their partner were satisfied, committed, and had passionate, friendship, selfless, and practical love styles. These individuals did not endorse jealous or game-playing love styles. Respect for partner was also significantly related to permissiveness ($r = -.22$), communion ($r = .13$), self-disclosure ($r = .50$), and SOI attitudes ($r = -.34$). Therefore, individuals who respected their partners were willing to share intimate information and did not endorse attitudes that casual sex is ok. These findings are interesting and suggest that respect is an important aspect of romantic relationships that deserves more attention in the literature.

Table 11

Correlations Between Relational Variables

	Permissive	Birth Control	Communion	Instrument	Self-disclosure	Sex Com	SOI Attitudes	SOI Behaviors	R-Self-esteem
One SE	.03	.01	-.09	-.04	-.04	-.07	.07	.06	.60**
Three SE	-.10	.02	.10	-.03	.21**	.13*	-.01	.04	.70**
Commit	-.20**	.03	.02	-.15**	.35**	.17**	-.02	.04	.18**
RAS	-.16**	-.03	.10	-.07	.39**	.34**	.06	.07	.23**
Eros	-.21**	-.01	.17**	-.08	.43**	.16**	.01	-.02	.20**
Ludus	.46**	.03	.17**	-.08	-.32**	-.10	.13*	.05	-.25**
Storge	-.08	-.08	.00	-.04	.31**	-.01	-.01	.01	.05
Pragma	-.14*	-.07	.10	.01	.16*	.05	.02	.06	.04
Mania	.02	-.03	.15**	.09	.01	.01	.04	-.04	-.22**
Agape	-.16**	-.12*	.13*	-.09	.24**	.06	-.02	-.02	-.04
Respect	-.20**	-.01	.13*	-.08	.50**	.10	-.34**	-.04	.26**
Perceived Respect	-.19**	-.01	.11*	-.10*	.42**	.13*	-.01	.04	.30**

Table 11 (continued)

	Three- item SE	Commit	RAS	Eros	Ludus	Storge	Pragma	Mania	Agape	Respect	Perceived Respect
One SE	.67**	.06	.13*	.15*	-.11*	.03	.07	-.10	-.03	.13*	.15*
Three SE		.23**	.27**	.24**	-.23**	.10	.11*	-.20**	-.01	.30**	.33**
Commit			.68**	.56**	-.23**	.20**	.00	-.13*	.23**	.42**	.44**
RAS				.65**	-.25**	.21**	.05	-.11*	.31**	.53**	.57**
Eros					-.20**	.29**	.15**	.05	.36**	.61**	.56**
Ludus						-.11*	.04	.24**	-.19**	-.29**	-.26**
Storge							.20**	.04	.23**	.36**	.29**
Pragma								.10	.22**	.20**	.19**
Mania									.20**	.32**	-.18**
Agape										.20**	.23**
Respect											.82**

Table 11 (continued)

	Birth Control	Communion	Instrument	Self-disclosure	Sexual Com	SOI Attitudes	SOI Behaviors	R-Self-esteem
Permissive	.15**	.11*	.57**	-.22**	-.09	.17*	.03	-.11*
Birth Control		.28**	.14**	.09	-.02	-.08	-.02	.07
Communion			.20**	.15**	.08	-.15**	-.02	.09
Instrument				-.20**	-.05	.12*	-.01	-.05
Self-disclosure					.12*	-.05	-.04	.25**
Sexual Com						.03	.01	.14*
SOI attitudes							.63**	-.05
SOI behaviors								.02

Note: Permissive = Permissiveness, Instrument = Instrumentality, SOI = Sociosexual Index Attitudes or Behavior, R-Self-esteem = Rosenberg's self-esteem, Sex Com = Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale, Commit = Commitment, RAS = Relationship Assessment Scale, One SE = Single-Item Self-esteem (Robins et al.'s, 2001), 3 SE = Three-item self-esteem measure (e.g., C. Hendrick, Hendrick, & Dicke, 1998)

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

Discussion

The primary purpose of Study 3 was to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis on the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale to determine the best fitting model. Two, three, five, and six factor models were tested. Results of the confirmatory factor analyses suggested that the six factor model including Compromise, Avoidance, Interactional Reactivity, Separation, Domination, and Submission was the best fitting model. These six factors accounted for 69.4% of the variance in conflict.

The relationship between the subscales of the RPCS and the subscales of the Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Scale (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988) was also examined. While there were some strong correlations between subscales, the RPCS does seem to measure strategies that the ESCT does not. Domination and interactional reactivity were strongly correlated to distributive tactics. Perhaps these two subscales of the RPCS are types of distributive tactics. Compromise was strongly correlated with integrative tactics. Integrative tactics are those tactics that include compromise, negotiation, and collaboration, so this relationship was not surprising. One interesting finding was that the RPCS subscale of avoidance shared a small yet significant relationship to avoidant tactics from the ESCT. Perhaps the two scales are measuring different aspects of avoidance as a conflict strategy. Separation, avoidance, and submission shared small to moderate correlations with the subscales of the ESCT scale.

It should be noted that the highest correlations between scales of the RPCS and the ESCT were .63 between interactional reactivity and distributive tactics and .60 between domination and distributive tactics. These relationships accounted for only 39.7% and 36% of shared variance, respectively. Thus, there was only modest overlap

between these subscales, suggesting that the subscales of interactional reactivity and domination are measuring a different aspect of conflict strategies than that of the distributive tactic subscale of the ESCT scale. In addition, the ESCT scale has not been used extensively in the close relationship literature to measure conflict, suggesting that a new scale is needed. The six factors of the RPCS may provide a better measure of conflict in dating relationships than the three factors of the ESCT scale.

A second goal of Study 3 was to determine how these conflict strategies related to other relational variables such as satisfaction, respect, love styles, self-disclosure, commitment, sexual communication, sociosexual orientation, and sexual attitudes. It should be noted that choices regarding which variables to designate as predictors, mediators, and criterion variables in the regressions and mediational analyses seem to reflect assumptions about directionality. However, the relationships among the conflict styles and other variables (indeed among all the relational variables) are probably bi-directional. A case could certainly be made for organizing the analyses differently. For example, the current studies tested conflict as a mediator between communication and relationship satisfaction. Future studies could examine communication as a mediator of conflict and satisfaction to offer an alternative explanation.

Conflict and Communication

Previous research indicated that communication is very important to other aspects of the relationship (Jourard, 1971; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). Specifically, individuals who were disclosing to their partners were more committed, more satisfied, and experienced more love for their partners. Also, some theories of conflict (e.g., systems theory, behavioral theories) suggest that communication problems are a key part of

relationship conflict. Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted relationships between conflict and two types of communication: self-disclosure and sexual communication, respectively. Both self-disclosure and sexual communication were positively related to compromise suggesting that individuals who were willing to share intimate information with their partners as well as discuss sexual issues were more willing to find a middle ground when faced with conflict. Self-disclosure was negatively related to domination and submission. Thus, individuals who were unwilling to share intimate information with their partner were more likely to push their partner or give in to their partner when faced with conflict. Sexual communication was negatively related to interactional reactivity, avoidance, and submission. Thus, individuals who were unwilling to discuss sexual issues with their partners were more likely to become verbally abusive, avoid discussing conflict, or give in to their partners when faced with conflict. Also, results of exploratory regression analyses revealed that sexual communication was a significant predictor of compromise and self-disclosure.

Communication does seem to be important to conflict and appears to be related to the strategy an individual chooses to use when faced with conflict. Individuals who were willing to openly discuss sexual and nonsexual information were more likely to use constructive strategies when faced with conflict while individuals who were unwilling to openly discuss sexual and nonsexual topics were more likely to use destructive conflict strategies. Compromise does include a discussion between partners to reach a common ground so it is not surprising that individuals who were more willing to communicate about intimate topics were also more likely to constructively discuss conflict topics. Avoidance involves denying that conflict is present or an unwillingness to discuss

conflict while submission involves giving in to partner with little or no discussion. It makes sense that individuals who did not report openly discussing intimate issues as well as individuals who gave in to their partners were also unwilling to discuss conflict issues with their romantic partners. Finally, interactional reactivity is characterized by frequent conflict and verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is destructive to relationships and not indicative of good communication. Thus, individuals who were verbally abusive were also unwilling to openly discuss intimate issues with their romantic partners.

Conflict and Relationship Satisfaction

Previous research suggests that conflict strategy is actually more influential to satisfaction in a relationship than frequency of conflict (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Cramer, 2004; Holmes & Murray, 1996). Frequency of conflict was not assessed in the current studies. However, results indicated that relationship satisfaction is related to conflict strategy. Hypothesis 3 predicted a positive relationship between satisfaction and constructive conflict strategies and a negative relationship between satisfaction and destructive conflict strategies. As predicted, individuals who reported using compromise as a conflict strategy also reported high relationship satisfaction. Individuals who reported using destructive conflict strategies (i.e., domination, interactional reactivity, submission) reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction. It seems that individuals who are able to find a middle ground when faced with conflict with their romantic partner were happier with their relationship. However, for individuals using strategies involving pushing partner, becoming verbally abusive, or giving in to partner, relationship satisfaction was decreased.

These results seem consistent with previous research suggesting that conflict strategy is related to relationship satisfaction. Individuals who report using a constructive strategy such as compromise reported being satisfied with their romantic relationship. However, individuals who used a destructive strategy reported dissatisfaction with their romantic relationships. Interestingly, in the exploratory regression analyses, relationship satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, was a significant predictor of interactional reactivity and domination. Thus, being dissatisfied with one's relationship was predictive of using interactional reactivity or domination as a conflict strategy.

Conflict and Respect

Prior to these studies, the relationship between conflict and respect had received little if any attention in the close relationship literature. S. Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) found that respect was related to many positive relationship qualities such as satisfaction, commitment, and love. Hypothesis 4 predicted that individuals who respected their partners would likely show respect to their partner in conflict situations as well. Also, individuals who had little respect for their partners were expected to use destructive conflict strategies when faced with conflict. Results revealed that both respecting one's partner and perceiving respect from partner was positively related to compromise. Therefore, individuals who used compromise as a conflict strategy were more likely to report respect for their partners and felt that their partners respected them. Interestingly, respect for partner was also positively related to avoidance. Individuals who respected their partners may have avoided discussing conflict with their partners so as not to show disrespect for them. Respect for partner and perceived respect from partner were negatively related to interactional reactivity, domination, and submission. Thus,

individuals who had little respect for their partners or perceived little respect from their partners were more likely to verbally abuse, push, and give in to their partners during conflict. These results provide a first step in examining the relationship between conflict and respect.

Conflict and Gender

Previous research has demonstrated that women tend to deal with conflict by using negative, active strategies (e.g., manipulation, criticism) while men, on the other hand, tend to use passive strategies such as avoidance (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988; Hojjat, 2000). Similarly, there is evidence that women tend to approach conflict while men withdraw from conflict. However, Klinetob and Smith (1996) actually found that when discussing a topic in which the husband wanted the wife to change, husbands were more likely to approach or demand while wives were more likely to withdraw from conflict.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that women would report using interactional reactivity and domination. Men were expected to endorse strategies such as avoidance and separation. Contrary to prediction, males reported using interactional reactivity, domination, *and* submission more than females. Thus, males were more likely than females to report becoming verbally abusive, pushing partner, and giving in to partner when faced with conflict. It is interesting that males reported using both domination and submission. Perhaps males used submission not as a tactic to win the argument but rather to simply appease and silence their partners. These findings are inconsistent with previous research suggesting that females are more likely to use negative, active strategies while men are more likely to avoid discussing conflict with their partners. Perhaps certain topics were

salient to the men and influenced how they responded to the conflict measure.

Unfortunately, conflict topics were not included in the present study so this possibility can not be examined further. Another possibility is that these results could be due to cultural differences. Perhaps these participants attending college in Texas differ from students attending college in other areas of the U.S. There were no gender differences in compromise, separation, or avoidance.

Conflict and Type of Relationship

According to Braiker and Kelley (1979), different relationship statuses are characterized by different levels of interdependence which influence other aspects of the relationship. Early in a relationship, expectations are likely not discussed as openly as in later stages of relationships. Thus, conflict strategies may differ for individuals who are casually versus seriously dating. Hypothesis 6 predicted that casual daters would more likely report using compromise or avoidance while serious daters would report using other strategies such as domination and separation. In Study 3, there were no differences in relationship status for avoidance, domination, or submission. However, contrary to prediction, serious daters reported using compromise more than casual daters. Also, casual daters reported using interactional reactivity and separation more than serious daters.

Although these findings were not predicted, in retrospect these differences do seem to make sense. Serious daters likely feel that there is a lot to lose due to the seriousness of the relationship and thus choose a constructive strategy such as compromise in an effort to preserve the relationship. Casual daters, on the other hand,

may not feel as compelled to preserve the relationship and view verbal abuse or separation as acceptable means of dealing with conflict.

Also, as part of Hypothesis 7, commitment and length of relationship were tested as predictors of conflict strategy. One would expect that serious daters would be more committed to the relationship and have longer relationship length than casual daters, so perhaps these variables were also important to conflict. Specifically, the goal of these analyses was to determine whether length or commitment accounted for more variance in conflict strategies. For **compromise** and **submission**, commitment was the only significant predictor of the conflict strategy. Commitment accounted for 13.8% of the variance in compromise and for 4.1% of the variance in submission. Therefore, commitment was more important than length of relationship in explaining variance in compromise and submission. For **interactional reactivity**, both length and commitment were significant predictors with commitment as only a slightly better predictor. For **separation**, neither length nor commitment was a significant predictor. These analyses were not conducted for avoidance or domination because commitment and length were not both significantly related to these two strategies.

Conflict, Communication, and Satisfaction

According to Jourard (1971), poor communication can have negative effects on romantic relationships. Communication seems to be very important to relationship satisfaction and communication is a key component of conflict. Hypothesis 7 predicted mediational models in which poor communication (i.e., low levels of self-disclosure and sexual self-disclosure) was expected to result in use of destructive strategies that would in turn result in relationship dissatisfaction. Regression analyses tested conflict as a

mediator of self-disclosure and satisfaction as well as conflict as a mediator of sexual communication and satisfaction. For self-disclosure, compromise was the only conflict strategy that appeared to mediate the relationship between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction. For sexual communication, compromise, interactional reactivity, and submission appeared to mediate the relationship between sexual communication and relationship satisfaction. These results suggest that at least some of the conflict strategies partially explain the relationship between communication and relationship satisfaction.

Conflict and Sexuality

As previously mentioned, good sexual communication was related to constructive conflict strategies while poor sexual communication was related to destructive conflict strategies. The relationship between conflict and sexuality was also examined for both sexual attitudes and sociosexual orientation. First, the relationship between sexual attitudes and conflict has received little attention in the close relationship literature. In Hypothesis 8, permissive attitudes (i.e., casual sexuality) were expected to be related positively to destructive conflict strategies. Permissiveness was significantly positively related to destructive conflict strategies such as domination and interactional reactivity. The results suggest that individuals endorsing casual sexuality were more likely to dominate their partners or become verbally abusive when faced with conflict. Perhaps these individuals do not value their relationship and view domination and interactional reactivity as effective conflict strategies. Permissiveness was also negatively related to compromise.

The relationship between conflict and sociosexual orientation was also assessed. Individuals may have a restricted orientation in which they hold attitudes that casual sex

is not okay and do not engage in sexual activities with many partners. Individuals may also have an unrestricted orientation in which they hold attitudes that casual sex is okay and report having sex with many partners. Additionally, sociosexuality may be examined in terms of attitudes or behaviors. In Hypothesis 10, it was predicted that individuals with unrestricted sociosexual orientations would report using destructive conflict strategies while individuals with restricted orientations would report using constructive strategies. Interestingly, there were no significant relationships between conflict strategies and sociosexual behaviors. However, sociosexual attitudes were related to interactional reactivity, submission, and domination. Individuals with unrestricted sociosexual attitudes were more likely to report becoming verbally abusive, dominating their partners, or giving in to partners when faced with conflict.

Conflict and Love

According to Richardson et al. (1989), an individual's style of loving is related to how that individual responds to conflict. Consistent with previous research, Hypothesis 9 predicted that Eros and Agape would be positively related to compromise and separation. Ludus was predicted to be positively related to domination, interactional reactivity, and avoidance. Both Eros and Agape was positively related to compromise, but not to separation. Thus, individuals with a passionate love style and selfless love style were more likely to find a middle ground when faced with conflict with their romantic partners. Interestingly, the relationship between compromise and Eros appeared to be stronger in the current study ($r = .48$) than in the study by Richardson et. al ($r = .19$). The relationship between Agape and compromise ($r = .25$) was similar to the previous study ($r = .20$). Eros was negatively related to interactional reactivity and domination in the

current study while Agape was negatively related to domination only. In Richardson et al.'s study, Eros was not significantly related to domination. However, Agape was significantly negatively related to domination ($r = -.19$), which was consistent with the relationship between Agape and domination in Study 3 ($r = -.15$) of the current research.

Individuals with a game-playing love style (Ludus) were more likely to report dominating their partners and using verbal abuse when faced with conflict. In Study 3, the correlation between Ludus and domination was .39. In Richardson et al.'s study, the correlation between Ludus and a dominating conflict style was .22. Ludus was negatively related to using compromise as a conflict strategy in Study 3, but this relationship was not found in Richardson et al.'s study.

Interestingly, the other love styles were also related to conflict strategies, unlike in previous research. Richardson et al. found that Storge was not significantly related to any of the conflict strategies. In Study 3, Storge (friendship love) was positively related to compromise and negatively related to interactional reactivity. Pragma (practical love) was positively related to compromise and avoidance. Richardson and colleagues did find the relationship between Pragma and avoidance, but found no such relationship between compromise and Pragma. Finally, Ludus was positively related to domination and submission which differed from previous research demonstrating that Ludus was positively related to compromise only. Therefore, individuals with a game-playing love style were more likely to push as well as give in to their partner. Perhaps these differences were due in part to the different types of conflict measures used in the studies. Richardson et al. used Rahim's (1983) Organizational Conflict Inventory, while Study 3 used the RPCS. Because more relationships between conflict and love styles were found

in Study 3 as compared to previous research, a case could be made that the RPCS may be a more sensitive measure of conflict styles and may be more closely associated with central relational variables than is Rahim's scale. Perhaps the RPCS is a more appropriate measure to use when examining certain relational variables.

Commitment, Love, and Conflict

Because commitment seems to be an important part of some of the loves styles, commitment was also tested as a mediator of the relationship between love styles and conflict. Specifically, the mediational models were tested for compromise and interactional reactivity. For compromise, commitment seemed to mediate the relationship between compromise and Agape, Storge, and Ludus. For interactional reactivity, commitment seemed to mediate the relationship between interactional reactivity and Eros, Ludus, and Storge. Thus, commitment seemed to at least partially explain the relationship between these love styles and compromise and interactional reactivity.

Chapter V

General Discussion and Implications

Summary

Studies 1, 2, and 3 were successful in developing a new scale to measure everyday conflict experienced by individuals in dating relationships. Study 3 demonstrated that the six factor model to measured conflict well and may be useful to researchers interested in measuring conflict strategies in romantic relationships. The results of these studies were also important in adding to our knowledge of conflict and how it relates to respect, sexuality, and commitment. These are areas that had received little attention in previous research.

Limitations

Although the studies provided some interesting results, there are several limitations to the current research. One limitation of the current studies is that only undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses were included as participants. Using this sample likely limits the generalizability of the results to other populations such as married individuals, divorced individuals, and even individuals of similar ages to this sample who are not enrolled in college. Future studies should examine other populations so as to increase the generalizability of results. However, the RPCS was developed as a measure directed toward dating relationships because existing measures primarily assess conflict in long-term or married relationships. Given that fact, this limitation is intrinsic to the purpose of the research.

On a similar note, the ages of participants were very young (i.e., majority 22 years or younger). Again, this limits the generalizability of results to other age groups. Future studies should examine other age groups to determine if the results will generalize.

Finally, the majority of the sample was European American (69.3%). Thus, it was difficult to examine differences in ethnicity. It would be interesting to examine whether there are ethnicity differences in conflict styles. Future research is necessary to explore this possibility.

Directions for Future Research

Studies are already underway examining the relationship between conflict strategies and conflict issues as well as the relationship between conflict and mental and physical health. In the first of these studies, participants are asked to report which conflict strategy they are likely to use given certain conflict issues (e.g., money, sex). In the second study, participants respond to the RPCS as well as measures of anxiety, depression, alcohol use, physical health, and social support. Constructive strategies are expected to be related to better mental and physical health while destructive strategies are expected to be related to poor mental and physical health.

It would also be interesting to examine the potential use of the RPCS as a measure of conflict for couples seeking therapy. Perhaps, the RPCS could be used as a diagnostic tool in helping individuals understand their own and their partners' conflict styles. With this information, therapists may be able to assist couples in dealing with conflict with more effective strategies which may in turn improve certain relationship qualities such as satisfaction.

Future research could also examine how the strategies of the RPCS relate to other relational variables such as jealousy and trust, as well as how personality and individual difference variables relate to conflict. This research could be particularly important in examining separation as a conflict strategy because the regression analyses yielded no significant predictors of this strategy. Perhaps other relational variables or personality variables not assessed in the current studies are related to separation.

It might also be interesting to examine more extensively the relationship between conflict and respect. These studies took a first step at investigating the relationship between conflict strategies and respect. Constructive conflict strategies were related to greater respect for partner as well as perceived respect from partner. Additionally, destructive strategies were related to little respect for partner and perceived respect from partner. Perhaps future studies could examine the directionality of this relationship.

Conflict in Human Relationships

Although the focus of the current studies was to examine romantic conflict, conflict is an important part of all human relationships. In addition to romantic relationships, parent-child, work, sibling, and peer relationships involve some degree of conflict. Conflict is also important in influencing wars among cultures, religions, and countries. Thus, the study of conflict is essential in understanding human relationships. The current research highlights some aspects of conflict such as ways conflict may be handled as well as its role in how humans interact “relationally.” As the current research suggests, how conflict is handled is related to a variety of other aspects of the relationship such as satisfaction and communication. Similar relationships may also be present in other types of relationships such as parent-child and sibling relationships.

Results of all three studies suggest that the way individuals handle conflict with their romantic partners is related to other aspects of the relationship including communication, satisfaction, respect, sexuality, and love. For example, across all three studies, compromise shared high correlations with positive relationship qualities such as relationship satisfaction, respect, Eros, self-disclosure, and commitment. These findings suggest that individuals who use a constructive conflict strategy such as compromise experience many good relationship qualities.

Additionally, compromise was found to partially mediate the relationship between self-disclosure and relationship satisfaction as well as sexual communication and satisfaction. Thus, communication alone may not actually be as important in influencing satisfaction with the relationship as how an individual communicates during conflict. This finding demonstrates the importance of compromise as a conflict strategy and may clarify previous research that showed communication to be strongly related to or even predictive of relationship satisfaction.

Since compromise is related to so many positive relationship qualities, what prevents people from compromising when faced with conflict? One explanation could be lack of motivation. Perhaps some individuals are unwilling to compromise with their partners during conflict. These individuals may have selfish motives that result in using destructive strategies such as domination or interactional reactivity rather than constructive strategies such as compromise. Another explanation for not using compromise as a strategy could be lack of social skills. Perhaps individuals who do not compromise are lacking the skills necessary to communicate constructively with their partners during conflict. These individuals may have motivation to compromise but do

not know how to do so. There are clinical implications for these couples who lack motivation or skills that prevent them from using compromise as a conflict strategy. For example, in couple's therapy, therapists are not likely to see clients who are high in both motivation and skills or individuals who are both low in motivation or skills. Rather, therapists are more likely to see couples high in motivation but low in skills or couples low in motivation and high in skills. It is important for therapists to make distinctions between these two couple types because they require different types of intervention.

Interactional reactivity also shared several high correlations with relational variables. For example, interactional reactivity was negatively related to Eros, satisfaction, respect, perceived respect, self-esteem, and commitment. In addition, interactional reactivity was positively related to Ludus, Mania, Permissiveness, Instrumentality, and SOI attitudes. Thus, using the destructive strategy of interactional reactivity was related to many negative relationship qualities.

Some of the relationships between interactional reactivity and relational variables could have clinical implications. For example, individuals who have possessive love styles (i.e., Mania) and use interactional reactivity may be prone to stalking their partners. Due to their possessive love style, they may find it necessary to keep watch over their partner. They may easily become jealous and lash out at their partner. It is important for therapists to note these qualities in an individual to help the person more effectively deal with conflict and jealousy.

Additionally, interactional reactivity was negatively related to both respect for partner and perceived respect from partner. Thus, individuals who reported using verbally abusive tactics were unlikely to respect their partners or perceive that their

partners respected them. It seems possible that finding the root of this disrespect between the partners might be beneficial in addressing the use of the destructive conflict strategy as well.

Interestingly, interactional reactivity was correlated positively to both permissive sexual attitudes and unrestricted sociosexual attitudes. Therefore, those individuals who endorsed casual sexuality were likely to be verbally abusive and report frequent conflict with their partners. There could be at least three explanations for these relationships. First, the partner who holds the permissive attitude may react in a verbally abusive manner during conflict due to guilt over being unfaithful to the partner. Second, the partner may displace their own attitudes of permissiveness onto the partner. Thus, the reaction to conflict is that of extreme anger and verbal abuse. Finally, if the two partners hold different attitudes in regards to casual sexuality, this may be a source of frequent conflict, which is one aspect of interactional reactivity.

Finally, interactional reactivity was found to be a partial mediator of the relationship between sexual communication and satisfaction. Poor sexual communication was related to poor relationship satisfaction. As with compromise, communication alone may not actually be as important in influencing satisfaction with the relationship as how an individual communicates during conflict. That is, the verbal abuse characterized by interactional reactivity may be more important to relationship dissatisfaction than simply not communicating well about sexual issues.

In conclusion, the RPCS has the potential to help us understand how couples deal with conflict, which is one of the most important tasks in human interaction, including dyadic interaction. The current research demonstrated just how important conflict is in

relation to other relational variables. There seem to be many benefits to using constructive conflict strategies. One such benefit is greater relationship satisfaction. Such increased satisfaction may occur in all relationships, not just romantic ones.

Compromise, and other constructive conflict strategies, deserve much attention, both in future research and in applied settings.

References

- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1173-1182.
- Braiker, H. B., & Kelley, H. H. (1979). Conflict in the development of close relationships. In R. L. Burgess & T. L. Huston (Eds.), *Social exchange in developing relationships* (pp. 135-168). New York: Academic Press.
- Buss, D. M. (1999). *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of the mind*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Byers, E. S., & Demmons, S. (1999). Sexual satisfaction and sexual disclosure within dating relationships. *The Journal of Sex Research, 36*, 180-189.
- Canary, D. J., Cunningham, E. M., & Cody, M. J. (1988). Goal types, gender, and locus of control in managing interpersonal conflict. *Communication Research, 15*, 426-446.
- Canary, D. J., & Cupach, W. R. (1988). Relational and episodic characteristics associated with conflict tactics. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5*, 305-325.
- Canary, D. J., Cupach, W. R., & Messman, S. J. (1995). *Relationship conflict*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Catania, J. A. (1998). Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale. In C.M. Davis, W. L. Yarber, R. Bauserman, G. Schreer, & S. L. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (pp. 129-131). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990). Gender and social structure in the demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 73-81.
- Christensen, A., & Shenk, J. L. (1991). Communication, conflict, and psychological distance in nondistressed, clinic, and divorcing couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 59*, 458-463.
- Christensen, A., & Walczynski, P. T. (1997). Conflict and satisfaction in couples. In R. J. Sternberg & M. Hojjat (Eds.), *Satisfaction in close relationships* (pp. 249-274). New York: Guilford.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences (3rd ed.)*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Elbaum Associates.

- Cramer, D. (1998). *Close relationships. The study of love and friendship*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cramer, D. (2004). Emotional support, conflict, depression, and relationship satisfaction in a romantic partner. *The Journal of Psychology, 138*, 532-542.
- Crandal, R. (1973). The measurement of self-esteem and related constructs. In J. P. Robinson & P. R. Shaver (Eds), *Measures of psychological attitudes (Rev. ed)* (pp. 80-82). Ann Arbor, ISR.
- Cupach, W. R., & Comstock, J. (1990). Satisfaction with sexual communication in marriage: Links to sexual satisfaction and dyadic adjustment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7*, 179-186.
- Cupach, W. R., & Metts, S. (1995). The role of sexual attitude similarity in romantic heterosexual relationships. *Personal Relationships, 2*, 287-300
- Frei, J. R., & Shaver, P. R. (2002). Respect in close relationships: Prototype definition, self-report assessment, and initial correlates. *Personal Relationships, 9*, 121-139.
- Gossman, I., Julien, D., Mathieu, M., & Chartrand, E. (2002). The Sexual Initiation Scale: Development and initial validation. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, 11*, 133-142.
- Gottman, J. M. (1993). The roles of conflict engagement, escalation, and avoidance in marital interaction: A longitudinal view of five types of couples. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*, 6-15.
- Gottman, J. M., & Levensen, R. W. (1992). Toward a typology of marriage based on affective behavior: Preliminary differences in behavior, physiology, health, and risk for dissolution. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 221-233.
- Heavey, C. L., Christensen, A., & Malamuth, N. M. (1995). The longitudinal impact of demand and withdrawal during marital conflict. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 63*, 797-801.
- Heavey, C. L., Larson, B. M., Zumtobel, D. C., & Christensen, A. (1996). The Communication Patterns Questionnaire: The reliability and validity of a constructive communication subscale. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58*, 796-800.
- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (1986). A theory and method of love. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50*, 392-402.

- Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (2004). Sex and romantic love: Connects and disconnects. In J. H. Harvey, A. Wenzel, & S. Sprecher (Eds.), *The handbook of sexuality in close relationships* (pp. 159-182). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Hendrick, C., Hendrick, S. S., & Dicke, A. (1998). The Love Attitudes Scale: Short Form. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15*, 147-159.
- Hendrick, C., Hendrick, S. S., & Reich, D. A. (2006). The Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale. *The Journal of Sex Research, 43*, 76-86.
- Hendrick, S. S. (1988). A generic measure of relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50*, 93-98.
- Hendrick, S. S. (2004). *Understanding close relationships*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1995). Gender differences and similarities in sex and love. *Personal Relationships, 2*, 55-65.
- Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (2002). Linking romantic love and sex: Development of the Perceptions of Love and Sex Scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 361-378.
- Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (2006). Measuring respect in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 23*, 881-899.
- Herold, E. S., & Way, L. (1988). Sexual self-disclosure among university women. *The Journal of Sex Research, 24*, 1-14.
- Hojjat, M. (2000). Sex differences and perceptions of conflict in romantic relationships. *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships, 17*, 598-617.
- Holmes, J. G., & Murray, S. L. (1997). Conflict in close relationships. In E. T. Higgins & A. W. Kruglanski (Eds.) *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 622-654). New York: Guilford.
- Jourard, S. M. (1971). *The transparent self (Rev. ed.)*. New York: Van Nostrand.
- Kammrath, L. K., & Dweck, C. (2006). Voicing conflict: Preferred conflict strategies among incremental and entity theorists. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 32*, 1497-1508.
- Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. New York: John Wiley.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practices of structural equation modeling*. New York: The Guilford Press.

- Klinetob, N. A., & Smith, D. A. (1996). Demand-withdraw communication in marital interaction: Tests of the interspousal contingency and gender role hypotheses. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58, 945-957.
- Lawrance, K., & Byers, E. S. (1995). Sexual satisfaction in long-term heterosexual relationships. The interpersonal exchange model of sexual satisfaction. *Personal Relationships*, 2, 267-285.
- Lee, J. A. (1973). *The colors of love: An exploration of the ways of loving*. Don Mills, Ontario: New Press.
- Lee, J. A. (1977). A typology of styles of loving. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 3, 173-182.
- Lloyd, S. A. (1987). Conflict in premarital relationships: Differential perceptions of males and females. *Family Relations*, 36, 290-294.
- Lloyd, S. A., & Cate, R. M. (1985). The developmental course of conflict in dissolution of premarital relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2, 179-194.
- Long, E. C. J., Cate, R. M., Fehsenfeld, D. A., & Williams, K. M. (1996). A longitudinal assessment of a measure of premarital sexual conflict. *Family Relations*, 45, 303-308.
- Lulofs, R. S., & Cahn, D. D. (2000). *Conflict: From theory to action (2nd ed.)*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Lund, M. (1985). The development of investment and commitment scales for predicting continuity in personal relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 2, 3-23.
- Meeks, B. S., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1998). Communication, love, and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15, 755-773.
- Millers, L. C., Berg, J. H., & Archer, R. L. (1983). Openers: Individuals who elicit intimate self-disclosure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 44, 1234-1244.
- Norris, S. L., & Zweigenhaft, R. L. (1999). Self-monitoring, trust, and commitment in romantic relationships. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 139, 215-220.

- Notarius, C., & Vanzetti, N. (1983). Marital Agendas Protocol. In E. Filsinger (Ed.), *Marriage and family assessment: A sourcebook for family therapy* (pp. 209-227). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Ostovich, J. M., & Sabini, J. (2004). How are sociosexuality, sex drive, and lifetime number of sexual partners related? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *30*, 1255-1266.
- Peterson, D. R. (1983). Conflict. In H. H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau, & D. R. Peterson (Eds.), *Close relationships* (pp. 360-396). New York: Freeman.
- Peterson, D. R. (2002). Conflict. In H. H. Kelley (Ed.), *Foundations of psychology: Close relationships*. Clinton Corners, NY: Percheron Press.
- Pinney, E. M., Gerrard, M., & Denney, N. W. (1987). The Pinney Sexual Satisfaction Inventory. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *23*, 233-251.
- Rahim, M. A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*, 368-376.
- Rands, M., Levinger, G., & Mellinger, G. D. (1981). Patterns of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, *2*, 297-321.
- Reise, S. P., & Wright, T. M. (1996). Personality traits, Cluster B Personality Disorders, and sociosexuality. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *30*, 128-136.
- Richardson, D. R., Hammock, G. S., Lubben, T., & Mickler, S. (1989). The relationship between love attitudes and conflict responses. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *8*, 430-441.
- Robins, R. W., Hendin, H. M., & Trzesniewski, K. H. (2001). Measuring global self-esteem. Construct validation of a single-item measure and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *27*, 151-161.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Ruben, B. (1978). Communication and conflict: A systems perspective. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *64*, 202-210.
- Rubin, Z., Hill, C. T., Peplau, L. A., & Dunkel-Schetter, C. (1980). Self-disclosure in dating couples: Sex roles and the ethic of openness. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *42*, 305-317.

- Rusbult, C. E. (1980). Commitment and satisfaction in romantic associations: A test of the investment model. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 18*, 172-186.
- Rusbult, C. E., Johnson, D. J., & Morrow, G. D. (1986). Determinants and consequences of exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect- responses to dissatisfaction in adult romantic involvements. *Human Relations, 39*, 45-63.
- Rusbult, C. E., Zembrodt, I. M., & Gunn, L. K. (1982). Exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect: Responses to dissatisfaction in romantic involvements. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43*, 1230-1242.
- Sanderson, C. A., & Karetsky, K. H. (2002). Intimacy goals and strategies of conflict resolution in dating relationships: A mediational analysis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 317-337.
- Schaap, C., Buunk, B., & Kerkstra, A. (1988). Marital conflict resolution. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 203-244). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Sillars, A. L. (1980). Attributions and communication in roommate conflicts. *Communication Monographs, 47*, 180-200.
- Simpson, J. A. (1998). Sociosexual Orientation Inventory. In C.M. Davis, W. L. Yarber, R. Bauserman, G. Schreer, & S. L. Davis (Eds.), *Handbook of sexuality-related measures* (pp. 565-566). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sinclair, L., & Fehr, B. (2005). Voice versus loyalty: Self-construals and responses to dissatisfaction in romantic relationships. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 41*, 298-304.
- Sprecher, S. (1998). Social exchange theories and sexuality. *The Journal of Sex Research, 35*, 32-43.
- Sprecher, S. (2002). Sexual satisfaction in premarital relationships: Associations with satisfaction, love, commitment, and stability. *The Journal of Sex Research, 39*, 190-196.
- Sprecher, S., & Hendrick, S. S. (2004). Self-disclosure in intimate relationships: Associations with individual and relationship characteristics over time. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*, 857-877.
- Stanley, S. M., Markman, H. J., & Whitton, S. W. (2002). Communication, conflict, and commitment: Insights on the foundations of relationship success from a national survey. *Family Process, 41*, 659-675.

- Straus, M. A., Hamby, S. L., Boney-McCoy, S., & Sugarman, D. B. (1996). The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2): Development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of Family Issues, 17*, 283-316.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics (5th ed.)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Walster, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Wylie, R. C. (1974). *The self-concept (Rev. ed.)*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.
- Vogel, D. L., & Karney, B. R. (2002). Demands and withdrawal in newlyweds: Elaborating on the social structure hypothesis. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 19*, 685-701.
- Zacchilli, T. D. L., Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. S. (2005, April). *The development of the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale*. Poster session presented at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Nashville, TN.

Appendix A

Extended Literature Review

Introduction

Whether couples have been dating a few months or have been married for many years, conflict is an inevitable part of most relationships. According to Canary, Cupach, and Messman (1995), how couples handle conflict informs other areas of their relationship, such as how they attribute partner's behaviors and how satisfied they are in their relationship. These authors also noted that how couples deal with conflict is more influential on other aspects of the relationship (e.g., satisfaction) than the frequency of conflict in the relationship.

Conflict has been defined as "an interpersonal process that occurs whenever the actions of one person interfere with the actions of another" (Peterson, 1983, p. 365). On a similar note, Holmes and Murray (1997) provided a definition of conflict based on Kurt Lewin's conception. Conflict is considered to be any situation in which two or more people hold incompatible goals, and one person's attempt at attaining the goal interferes with goal attainment of the other person. It is easy to see how these definitions are applicable to conflict in romantic relationships. For example, a wife's goal of having a career may interfere with her husband's goal of having children. These incompatible goals would likely create conflict for the couple because the wife's choices interfere with the husband's desire to have children.

In discussing conflict it is important to make the distinction between the structure of conflict and the process of conflict. The **structure** of the conflict refers to the actual conflict of interest or the issue that is causing the couple to experience conflict

(Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). In the aforementioned example, the structure of the conflict was that the man wanted children, but the woman did not. The **process** of conflict includes the interaction that takes place between the partners. Thus, the woman from the example may avoid discussing the issue with her husband, while he may attempt to persuade her to change her mind. These strategies are part of the process of the conflict experienced by the couple. The current study will be primarily focused on the process of conflict rather than the structure of conflict between partners.

The purpose of the current research is to examine the relationship between conflict and sexual attitudes, communication (including self-disclosure), love attitudes, and relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the relationships between conflict and both respect and commitment will be assessed. Gender differences will be explained as well.

Conflict

The relationship between conflict and other relationship variables has received considerable attention in the close relationship literature. Also, several theories have been proposed to examine how couples interpret and resolve conflict as well as how they select a particular strategy for dealing with conflict. These theories are discussed below, as is the relationship between conflict and relationship satisfaction.

Theories of Conflict

Several theories have been proposed to explain conflict in close relationships. Some of these approaches emphasize cognitive processes involved in the conflict process and resolution, whereas other theories emphasize the behavioral components (e.g., strategies) involved in conflict. Also, some theories examine how conflict relates to relationship satisfaction (or dissatisfaction).

Cognitive theories. Cognitive theories emphasize how individuals make sense of and interpret conflict situations (e.g., Canary et al., 1995). The two main cognitive theories of conflict are social exchange theory and attribution theory.

Kelley and Thibaut's (1978) social exchange theory has been applied to conflict in romantic relationships. The basic premise of this theory is that individuals evaluate relationships by examining the costs and rewards associated with the relationship. Costs include the amount of effort the individual puts into the relationship while rewards include the value of what is received. People assess the costs and rewards through a comparison level (CL) and comparison level for alternatives (CL_{alt}). According to the social exchange theory, individuals experience conflict when they feel that the rewards they receive are too few when compared to the costs of being in the relationship. Individuals use the CL to determine how satisfied they are in the relationship. Conflict occurs when an individual perceives that the outcomes received are too low and that the partner resists attempts to increase those outcomes.

According to Braiker and Kelley (1979), different levels of a relationship (e.g., casual dating, serious dating) are characterized by different levels of interdependence. The degree of interdependence a couple experiences is also related to a variety of other relational variables such as conflict, sexual intimacy, and love. Social exchange theory has been applied to the role of conflict in the development of the relationship as well as to the growth of the relationship. In particular, the theory has been applied to understand the exchange of information between partners and how this exchange relates to conflict. Braiker and Kelley explained that often individuals enter into a relationship with different ideas about the roles they want in the relationship and the events they want to occur

within the relationship. Early in the relationship, couples likely do not discuss these differences. However, as the relationship becomes more serious these conflicting interests become more apparent. Two responses to conflict emerge from the social exchange approach: avoidance response and constructive response. The avoidance response consists of a total or partial ending of the discussion regarding the conflict issue. Thus, there is little or no exchange of information. The constructive response is one in which new norms, attitudes, and goals are developed in response to the conflict issue. Thus, there is a greater exchange of information between partners so that they can deal constructively with the conflict issue.

How individuals interpret the conflict situation may be influential to which strategy they choose to employ when faced with conflict with their romantic partner. According to Lulofs and Cahn (2000), attribution theory is one explanation for conflict in close relationships. Attribution theory proposes that people behave as they do in conflict situations because of the conclusions they draw about the other person and the situation. These attributions may be internal (e.g., blame self) or external (e.g., blame partner or circumstances).

The attribution approach to conflict rests on three propositions (Sillars, 1980). First, individuals choose a conflict strategy based on perceived causality, attributions about partner's willingness to cooperate, and stability of the conflict. In terms of causality, individuals attribute the conflict situation as internal (i.e., personal) or external (i.e., situational). Also, conflict may be viewed as stable or unstable. For example, individuals attributing conflict to stable factors such as their partner's personality likely respond differently than individuals who attribute conflict to unstable factors such as

stress. In the stable case, individuals are more likely to use passive strategies rather than integrative strategies to deal with conflict. Passive strategies are indirect strategies that involve minimal communication about the conflict issue. An integrative strategy is one in which the couple engages in information exchange and thus is an active approach to dealing with conflict. In the unstable case, individuals are more likely use integrative strategies. The second proposition is that the presence of biases in attribution discourages the use of integrative strategies to deal with conflict. Finally, the conflict strategy an individual chooses affects relationship satisfaction. For example, use of integrative strategies is related to greater satisfaction.

Sillars (1980) asserted that the attributions individuals make in conflict situations affect how they define conflicts, interpret other's behavior, and select strategies for dealing with the conflict. He further explained that making attributions toward the other person (e.g., blaming partner) was negatively related to use of collaborative (i.e., working together) conflict strategies. For example, roommates were more likely to use distributive strategies (i.e., working against other) when attributing the conflict to or blaming their roommate. These findings could likely generalize to romantic partners in that attributions that individuals make when in conflict with their romantic partners affect how they deal with the conflict. More specifically, attributions that involve blaming the partner seem to be associated with less constructive ways of dealing with and resolving the conflict.

According to Peterson (2002), escalation of conflict is related to attributing blame to one's partner. Attributing blame to the other person also appears to be related to unpleasant and negative behaviors during the process of the conflict. External attributions

seem to be related to use of negative conflict strategies such as arguing loudly and becoming angry, while internal attributions would be related to more positive conflict strategies such as compromise.

Systems theory. Ruben's (1978) systems theory views conflict as a breakdown in communication. Ruben explained that conflict is an inevitable, continual part of relationships. Thus, conflict is not considered to be a disruption to the normal progression of the relationship, but rather it is a normal part of relationships. Conflict is necessary for the growth of the relationship. Conflict is believed to occur when one partner needs to adjust to the demands of the other partner or to the environment. Because conflict is a result of communication problems, the best way to resolve conflict is through communication.

Lulofs and Cahn (2000) described the three main assumptions of the systems approach to conflict. First, conflict and cooperation must occur simultaneously because growth and deterioration occur simultaneously in relationships. Second, conflict serves the goal of reducing alternatives as an individual adapts to the environment. Thus, conflict occurs so that individuals can investigate and reduce options. Finally, systems theory emphasizes interconnectedness, so that changes in conflict affect other aspects of the relationship. For example, increases in frequency or severity of conflict would likely affect variables such as satisfaction and sexuality within the relationship.

Consistent with systems theory, Christensen and Shenk (1991) reported that communication issues are commonly related to marital dissatisfaction. Couples who are distressed often report that they experience conflict over communication problems such as not talking to each other enough (Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988). When couples

use destructive rather than constructive means of problem solving, they are likely to become dissatisfied. Destructive strategies may include avoiding the issue as well as discussing the issue in non-effective ways. The latter would be consistent with the systems view of conflict. The presence of a demand/withdraw pattern is ineffective communication, and may result in dissatisfaction with the relationship. Individuals who demand in a conflict situation may approach conflict or push their partners when faced with conflict. Individuals who withdraw, on the other hand, avoid the conflict issue and are less likely to discuss the issue.

Christensen and Shenk (1991) were interested in how conflict involving psychological distance related to relationship dissatisfaction. Their sample included divorcing, clinical, and nondistressed couples. They measured communication patterns, relationship satisfaction, closeness, intimacy, and power. The authors found that distressed couples (divorcing and clinical) had poorer communication skills than nondistressed couples, with divorcing couples demonstrating the poorest communication skills. Also, distressed couples reported using avoidance and demand/withdraw communication more than nondistressed couples. Distressed couples reported more discrepancies in their desire for closeness as well. The authors concluded that both communication issues and incompatible goals distinguished distressed from nondistressed couples.

Thus, there seems to be some evidence in support of the systems theory of conflict in romantic relationships. Communication difficulties are at least one aspect that can differentiate satisfied from dissatisfied couples. Also, communication problems can influence the strategy that an individual uses when faced with conflict with a partner.

Behavioral theories of conflict strategies. Some theories, mostly based on behavior theory, propose that the conflict **strategy** a person employs is more important to overall relationship satisfaction than the **frequency** of conflict. Behavioral theory is concerned with behavioral strategies during the conflict process rather than with cognitive processes per se. Similar to systems theory, behavioral theorists presume that communication problems are at the root of relationship dissatisfaction (Christensen & Shenk, 1991).

Conflict in romantic relationships may include a variety of behaviors ranging from verbal disagreements, to the silent treatment, to physical assault. Couples vary in the strategies they employ when faced with conflict, and the same couple may approach one conflict issue differently from another issue. Several different strategies have been identified, and researchers have examined how these strategies relate to other relational variables such as satisfaction.

Many researchers have identified five major conflict strategies. Although called different names, there seems to be some agreement on what constitutes each strategy. According to Peterson (1983), these five strategies included separation, domination, compromise, integrative agreement, and structural improvement. When couples use the separation strategy, they withdraw from the situation and do not deal immediately with the issue. These individuals may use separation from the partner as time to “cool off” and rethink the issue. This strategy may be useful if couples use distance as a time for thinking about ways to solve the problem. However, withdrawal in itself does not resolve conflict and thus can be damaging to the relationship if the individuals do not come back to the issue in an attempt to resolve it. Domination is a strategy in which one partner uses

power to coerce the other into choosing the partner's side of the issue. Thus, one partner is motivated by selfishness and attempts to persuade the other to give in to the partner's wishes rather than trying to reach a compromise.

Peterson (1983) identified compromise as a strategy in which couples attempt to find a solution that is acceptable to both partners. Each partner must be willing to give a little to reach this solution. Integrative agreements, on the other hand, satisfy both partners' expectations. Peterson explained that this strategy is actually rare because it is very difficult to settle arguments in which both sides are very different. For example, if the wife really wants children, but the husband does not, it may be quite difficult to find a solution that satisfies both of their desires. Finally, structural improvement is a strategy that may be used after a couple encounters a serious conflict. This strategy goes beyond reaching a mutual agreement and instead affects how partners treat one another more generally. This strategy may influence couples to use open communication and new levels of intimacy. However, if the couple finds qualities in each other that they had not previously realized and do not like, they may actually separate.

Lulofs and Cahn (2000) also discussed five strategies which included avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration. They explained that these five strategies were originally conceptualized in terms of how much concern the person had for the relationship and for attaining personal goals. Avoidance is defined as not dealing with the conflict issue at all. Some examples of this strategy include using the silent treatment, avoiding issues, and physically removing oneself from their partner. Accommodation, on the other hand, is characterized by smoothing over disagreements and giving in. The strategy of competition includes one partner dominating and coercing

the other to agree with the partner. Individuals using this strategy are argumentative and are only interested in themselves. Compromise is characterized by finding a middle ground in which no one wins or loses. Couples implementing this strategy seek workable solutions that are not necessarily the best solutions. Finally, collaboration involves problem solving in which the choices meet the expectations of both partners.

Some researchers identify five conflict strategies, but other researchers have identified either three or four main strategies. Rusbult and colleagues (Rusbult, Zembrodt, & Gunn, 1982; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986) proposed four ways in which individuals could respond to conflict or dissatisfaction with their relationship. Two of these ways are considered to be constructive and the other two destructive to the relationship. These four strategies can also be examined on an activity/passivity dimension. Voice is an active, constructive strategy for dealing with conflict. This strategy involves discussing the issue in attempts to resolve the conflict. Loyalty, another constructive strategy, is passive. Individuals using this strategy neglect to talk over the conflict issue and stand by the partner no matter what. Both of these strategies are constructive in that the relationship remains intact whether or not the conflict is resolved.

Exit is an active, destructive strategy for dealing with conflict. Individuals using this style do not attempt to resolve the conflict, but rather leave the relationship. Finally, neglect is a passive, destructive strategy. Individuals using this strategy avoid discussing the issue, but remain in the relationship. This strategy is destructive because although the partners stay in the relationship physically they do not seem to be emotionally involved.

Rusbult et al. (1986) found that exit and neglect were both related to relationship dissatisfaction with exit representing the more extreme dissatisfaction.

Sinclair and Fehr (2005) examined how Rusbult et al.'s (1982) conception of conflict related to dissatisfaction in romantic relationships. In particular, they were interested in the relationship between conflict, self-construal (i.e., independent vs. dependent), and satisfaction. Individuals with an independent self-construal pursue autonomous goals, view themselves as separate from others, and are more direct when communicating with others. Thus, these individuals are more likely to use active and dominating approaches when in conflict with their partners. Individuals with interdependent self-construals, on the other hand, view themselves as connected to others, use avoidance rather than approach, and are indirect when communicating with others. These individuals are more likely to use avoidant strategies as well as compromise when dealing with conflict.

Sinclair and Fehr (2005) predicted that individuals with independent self-construals would respond to dissatisfaction by using active strategies such as exit and voice while individuals with interdependent self-construals would use passive strategies such as loyalty and neglect. In Study 1, they found partial support for their hypotheses. Independent self-construals were positively related to voice, negatively related to loyalty, and not significantly related to exit. Interdependent construals were positively related to loyalty, but not related to neglect. In Study 2, the authors primed self-construals so that some participants were primed to have independent self-construals while the remaining participants had interdependent construals. They found that individuals primed with independent construals were more likely to endorse voice than those primed with

interdependent construals. Individuals primed with interdependent self-construals reporting using loyalty as well as neglect. The authors concluded that self-construals influenced the strategy that individuals choose to deal with dissatisfaction.

Finally, Canary and Cupach (1988) identified only three strategies for dealing with conflict in close relationships: integrative, avoidance, and distributive. Integrative strategies are characterized by collaboration and negotiation. Thus, this strategy is considered to be constructive. Integrative tactics are positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, intimacy, and communication satisfaction. Distributive tactics, on the other hand, are actually destructive and involve criticism and sarcasm. Distributive tactics are negatively related to communication satisfaction as well as general relationship satisfaction. Finally, avoidant strategies include denial of conflict and changing the topic from the conflict issue to another topic.

While there is disagreement about the number of major strategies used to deal with conflict, there seems to be some general agreement about these strategies. For example, each set of strategies proposes that some of the strategies are constructive, but the other strategies are destructive to the relationship. Also, each of the major strategies emphasizes how individuals communicate with their partners. Finally, in most cases, satisfied and dissatisfied couples can be distinguished based on the strategies they employ.

Conflict and Satisfaction

The strategy an individual chooses to handle conflict is more important to satisfaction than frequency of conflict (Holmes & Murray, 1996). In fact, the strategy is one of the strongest predictors of satisfaction in romantic relationships (Cramer, 2004).

This is not to say that frequency of conflict is not an important variable as well. For example, research has shown that distressed couples experience more frequent conflicts than nondistressed couples (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997). Despite the relationship between frequency and satisfaction, the relationship between type of strategy employed and satisfaction appears to be stronger.

According to Christensen and Walczynski (1997), conflict is more predictive of satisfaction in well-established relationships than relationships in early stages. For example, during early stages of the relationship, incompatibilities may not be readily apparent and any mention of potential incompatibilities is likely avoided in an effort to preserve the new relationship. However, as a couple spends more time together, these incompatibilities become more apparent. These incompatibilities may have been present from the beginning of the relationship or may have developed as the partners changed over time. Incompatibilities may include differences in level of desired intimacy, sexual desires, and future goals. Whatever the case, incompatibilities likely result in conflict and how this conflict is handled affects satisfaction.

Rands, Levinger, and Mellinger (1981) conducted a study to examine how strategies for conflict resolution related to satisfaction among young married couples. Conflict resolution was assessed by examining spouses' perception of their partners' conflict styles as well as the outcome of these efforts to resolve the conflict. The authors identified three conflict strategies: spouse avoids, spouse attacks, and spouse compromises. They identified two different outcomes: escalation and intimacy. Results revealed four resolution patterns distinguished by intimacy and aggressiveness. The nonintimate-aggressive type (Type 1) was characterized by no satisfaction from conflict.

Specifically, conflict for these individuals escalates and they do not feel intimate afterwards. The nonintimate-nonaggressive type (Type 2) was characterized by little escalation but little intimacy as well. Type 2 couples were more satisfied with their marriage than Type 1 couples. The intimate-aggressive type (Type 3) reported attacking behavior but also expected intimacy following conflict. These couples reported reasonable satisfaction with their marriages. Finally, the intimate-nonaggressive type (Type 4) reported that they did not attack their partners and that intimacy often followed conflict. These couples reported high satisfaction.

The results of the previously mentioned studies indicate that how individuals approach conflict in their romantic relationships is related to how satisfied they are with the relationship. Couples for whom escalation is low and intimacy is high following conflict seem to have high satisfaction, but individuals who attack one another during conflict and show little intimacy after conflict have low relationship satisfaction (Rands et al., 1981). Also, the conflict strategy seems to be more predictive of satisfaction in later stages of the relationship than in earlier stages (Christensen & Walczynski, 1997).

Gender Issues in Conflict

Most studies examining conflict have addressed the influence of gender on the choice of conflict strategies. Research has indicated that females are more likely to use emotional tactics as well as distributive tactics such as criticism and anger, whereas males are more likely to use avoidance or make excuses (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988). Also, males and females seem to approach conflicts with different perspectives in that the number of conflicts and how conflicts are resolved is important to females whereas the number and stability of conflicts are important to males (Lloyd, 1987).

Hojjat (2000) examined gender differences in conflict strategies as well as perceptions of partner's conflict strategy. Conflict management was measured on the dimensions of active/passive and positive/negative. An active/positive strategy included negotiation. An active/negative strategy included coercion, abuse, and manipulation. A passive/positive strategy included sacrifice and empathy. Finally, a passive/negative strategy included avoidance or distancing self from the conflict situation. In two studies, couples rated their own conflict strategies as well as their perception of their partner's strategy. Hojjat found that women were more likely than men to assert themselves when trying to resolve conflict. Thus, women, as compared to men, were more likely to endorse negative, active strategies. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to avoid direct conflict and use resolution strategies including avoidance (passive, positive) when faced with conflict. Women appeared to better understand their partner's conflict strategy. Finally, for both men and women, negative strategies were significantly negatively related to relationship satisfaction, whereas positive strategies were not significantly related to satisfaction. Thus, there seems to be some differences in how men and women approach conflicts in their relationship.

Gender differences regarding the demand/withdraw pattern of conflict (i.e., one partner approaches conflict while the other withdraws) has been examined as well. In general, research evidence has shown that wives respond to conflict with demand while husbands are more likely to withdraw (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995). Heavey et al. examined the role of poor communication in predicting relationship satisfaction. They found that men withdrawing from the conflict reliably predicted decreases in the wives' relationship satisfaction.

Also, the pattern in which the woman demands and the man withdraws was also related to a decrease in wives' relationship satisfaction. However, the authors found that this response to conflict did not predict husbands' relationship satisfaction.

Klinetob and Smith (1996) also found gender differences related to the demand/withdraw pattern. They asked couples to discuss two issues; one in which the husband wanted the wife to change and one in which the wife wanted the husband to change. Results indicated that wives demanded and husbands withdrew when they discussed the wives' issues. However, when discussing the husbands' issues, the husbands demanded and the wives withdrew. This finding suggests that gender differences in the demand-withdrawal pattern for dealing with conflict do exist but the situational context should be considered when interpreting these differences.

Although conflict is influential to a couple's relationship satisfaction as well as other aspects of the relationship, the sexual aspect of the relationship is also likely to be quite important. Little research has examined these two variables together to determine how they relate to relationship satisfaction.

Relational Sexuality

Sexuality is a very important aspect of most romantic relationships. In fact, research shows that most individuals believe that sexual relations should take place within a romantic relationship (Cramer, 1998). Relational sexuality may include issues such as sexual communication, satisfaction, initiation, and attitudes and often these issues are examined in relation to general relationship satisfaction.

Theories of Sexuality

Several theories have been proposed to examine the role of sexuality in close relationships. Some of these theories have been concerned with how sexual issues influence relationship satisfaction.

Social exchange theories. Social exchange theories have been applied to conflict as well as to sexuality in close relationships. Sprecher (1998) explained that social exchange theories refer to theories that focus on the exchange of resources between individuals. She further explained that social exchange theories share several common assumptions. First, social exchange approaches assume that social behavior involves a series of exchanges. Second, individuals try to maximize rewards and minimize costs. Rewards are exchanges that the individual views as pleasurable, and costs are exchanges that result in punishment. Finally, any time an individual obtains a reward he or she feels the need to reciprocate. Sprecher identified three social exchange models that are relevant to sexuality: equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model, and the Interpersonal Model of Sexual Satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995).

Walster et al.'s (1978) equity model has been applied to sexuality in romantic relationships. The equity model is composed of four propositions. First, individuals want to maximize their outcomes (i.e., rewards minus punishments). Second, groups generally reward members who treat other members in an equitable manner and punish those who do not. Third, individuals in inequitable relationships experience distress. Individuals who are overbenefited experience less distress than individuals who are underbenefited. According to Sprecher (1998), individuals who are underbenefited tend

to feel anger, depression, and frustration. Finally, individuals in inequitable relationships will try to decrease or eliminate distress by restoring equity in the relationship.

Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model has also been applied to sexuality in romantic relationships. According to this model, satisfaction with a relationship as well as attraction are related to the comparison between costs and rewards associated with the relationship. Similar to other social exchange models, the Investment Model assumes that individuals want to minimize costs and maximize rewards. Thus, the discrepancy between a given outcome and the expectations an individual has regarding that relationship affects relationship satisfaction. Specifically, Rusbult found that when costs decreased relationship satisfaction increased. Additionally, reward value, or the extent to which individuals perceived good attributes in their relationship, was related to relationship satisfaction.

Another important aspect of the Investment Model is that it recognizes the relationship between commitment and investments. Investments are "resources one gives to the relationship that cannot be retrieved if the relationship were to end" (Sprecher, 1998, p. 34.). Investments may include intrinsic aspects of the relationship such as self-disclosure or extrinsic aspects such as mutual friends. Thus, investments not only increase relationship satisfaction but also increase commitment within the relationship.

According to Sprecher (1998), the investment model has not been directly applied to sexual satisfaction but rather is a model of general relationship satisfaction. Because relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are related, the investment model may give insight into what factors contribute to sexual satisfaction. For example, self-

disclosure is one type of investment that increases relationship satisfaction. Self-disclosure is likely also related to sexual satisfaction.

Finally, Lawrance and Byers's (1995) Interpersonal Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS) proposes that sexual satisfaction is dependent on how partners perceive rewards and costs in their sexual relationship. They defined sexual satisfaction as "an affective response arising from one's subjective evaluation of the positive and negative dimensions associated with one's sexual relationship" (p. 268). Thus, rewards would represent the positive dimensions associated with the sexual relationship while costs would represent negative dimensions. Similar to other exchange theories, the IEMSS takes comparison levels into account by proposing that the rewards and costs that an individual expects also affects satisfaction. According to the IEMSS, sexual satisfaction will be greatest when rewards are high, costs are low, and rewards exceed costs. Also, if the individuals' expectations are comparable to their actual rewards/costs they will experience greater sexual satisfaction.

Social exchange theories seem to provide a good explanation for how sex is related to relationship and sexual satisfaction. Although called by different names, the aforementioned theories share the common premise that individuals consider rewards and costs when determining satisfaction in their relationship and that sexuality can be essential in making this determination.

Evolutionary theory. Evolutionary psychology has been applied to sexuality in romantic relationships by examining gender differences in mating preferences (Buss, 1999). In particular, evolutionary theory has been used to explain why men have more sexual partners and are more willing to engage in sex shortly after meeting someone.

According to evolutionary theory of short-term mating, men maximize reproductive success by engaging in sex frequently with a lot of women. However, in terms of long-term mating Buss suggests, “Men want physically attractive, young, sexually loyal wives who will remain faithful until death” (p. 160). Interestingly, four sources of data confirm this statement. First, data concerning personal ads show that men have higher response rates to ads from women reporting to be young and attractive. Second, there is a tendency for men to marry women who are an average of three years younger than themselves. Third, women spend considerable time on their physical appearance in attempts to attract men. Finally, women degrade other women by pointing out physical flaws.

Women, on the other hand, are more discriminative when choosing a mating partner because they must invest so much time and resources in one offspring. In terms of long-term mating strategies, women look for qualities in men that suggest potential, ambition, and intelligence (Buss, 1999). They often choose men who are older than themselves as well. Women look for men who are likely to be both a good father and provider. These qualities seem to be less important when looking for a short-term mate. Research evidence has supported the evolutionary theory of women’s long-term mating strategies. For example, women have a higher response rate to personal ads indicating good financial status. Also, there is a tendency worldwide for women to marry men who are older than themselves.

Evolutionary theory has also been applied to explain men’s and women’s short-term mating strategies (Buss, 1999). Research indicates that men, compared to women, desire more sexual partners, seek sexual intercourse after less time has passed, have more

sexual fantasies, and have more extramarital affairs. This finding supports the notion that men maximize reproductive success by engaging in sex frequently with a lot of women.

C. Hendrick and Hendrick (2004) proposed a social theory of kin selection. Because sex is actually quite costly to an organism, the question of the adaptive function of sex is raised. The previous conception was that the gene was the unit of selection and thus the key to understanding the adaptive function of sex. In the social theory of kin selection, C. Hendrick and Hendrick propose that a pattern of human behavior (e.g., attachment, similarity, familiarity) is actually the unit of selection. The authors suggest that genetic relatedness may be important to understanding complex behaviors such as the bonding between a mother and infant. However, other behaviors exist that are not so easily explained. For example, spouses who of course are not genetically related show a great deal of love for one another and in some cases are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the other. Also, an infant who is adopted may bond with a parent just as intensely as an infant born to the parents. These examples provide support for the authors' emphasis on the importance of considering sociality when explaining the adaptation of sex and love.

Sociosexuality. Another area of sexuality that has received some attention in the close relationship literature and evolutionary psychology is sociosexuality. Sociosexuality is concerned with individuals' attitudes and behaviors related to sexuality. Simpson (e.g., 1998) developed a measure of sociosexuality. This inventory was designed to measure individual differences in attitudes and behaviors related to engaging in casual sexual relationships. Individuals who score high on the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory (SOI) are considered to have an unrestricted sociosexual orientation.

Unrestricted individuals report having a higher number of sexual partners, more one night stands, and believe that sex without love is acceptable more than do individuals who score low on the SOI, who are said to have a restricted orientation. These latter individuals report fewer sexual partners, are less likely to have one night stands, and believe that sex without love is unacceptable.

Personality traits seem to be related to an individual's sociosexual orientation (Reise & Wright, 1996). In particular, there seem to be gender differences in which personality characteristics are related to an unrestricted versus restricted sociosexual orientation. Reise and Wright found that some qualities women with an unrestricted orientation used to describe themselves included attractive, unpredictable, not conservative, and not moralistic. These women also reported that they compared themselves to others and enjoyed sexual experiences. The authors found that unrestricted males seem to have characteristics similar to narcissists and psychopaths. For example, these males described themselves as attractive, irresponsible, lacking warmth, and inconsistent ethically. Thus, there seem to be different patterns of personality traits for unrestricted males and females.

Other individual differences regarding sociosexual orientation have been examined. Ostovich and Sabini (2004) were interested in how sociosexual orientation related to sex drive and number of lifetime partners. In two studies, they found that sex drive was positively related to sociosexual orientation. Specifically, individuals with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation reported having a higher sex drive than individuals with a restricted orientation. Additionally, sex drive and sociosexual orientation were significantly related to number of sexual partners. Again, unrestricted individuals

reported a higher number of sexual partners than did individuals with a restricted orientation. Ostovich and Sabini also found that unrestricted individuals reported a greater frequency of sexual activity than those with a restricted orientation.

Sex and Satisfaction

Relational sexuality can affect various aspects of the relationship, especially relationship satisfaction. In particular, sexual communication, initiation, and sexual satisfaction have all been linked to overall relationship satisfaction.

Sexual satisfaction. Pinney, Gerrard, and Denney (1987) developed a scale to measure women's sexual satisfaction and to examine variables related to sexual satisfaction. The Pinney Sexual Satisfaction inventory is a 24-item scale consisting of two subscales. The General Sexual Satisfaction subscale measures global sexual satisfaction and the Satisfaction with Partner subscale measures sexual satisfaction directly related to the individual's partner. Pinney et al. found that relationship commitment was the best predictor of sexual satisfaction (using the combined scores from both subscales), general sexual satisfaction, and satisfaction with partner. The authors suggested that this finding may be explained in several ways. First, women who are in committed relationships may more effectively communicate their sexual needs. Second, sexual satisfaction may actually increase feelings of commitment. Finally, women may place greater importance on intimacy or other interpersonal aspects of the sexual relationship. Other factors related to sexual satisfaction included orgasmic consistency, contraceptive effectiveness, and frequency of sex per month.

Sprecher (2002) examined the relationship between sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability in premarital relationships. She

assessed dating couples' responses to these measures over five time periods. She found that sexual satisfaction was significantly and positively related to relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability. Thus, couples reporting greater sexual satisfaction were also more satisfied, more committed, and more stable in their relationship than couples who were not sexually satisfied. Also, Sprecher's data suggested that changes in sexual satisfaction over time were related to changes in the other relationship variables. However, Sprecher found no evidence for a causal relationship between sexual satisfaction and changes in relationship satisfaction, commitment, or stability. Couples who were still together from Time 1 to Time 2 reported higher sexual satisfaction at Time 1 than couples who were no longer together at Time 2. Also, sexual satisfaction had a stronger association with relationship quality for men as compared to women. Sprecher concluded that the results supported the social exchange model of sex which holds that balanced sexual exchanges are related to love, commitment, and satisfaction.

Sex and communication. The way in which a couple communicates about sexual matters can affect both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction. Additionally, the degree of self-disclosure in the relationship is related to sexual satisfaction. Jourard (1971) described a vicious cycle in which sexual frustration leads to anger that in turn leads to guilt. Frustration can result from lack of communication in the relationship. Jourard explained that when two relationship partners communicate openly they are more likely to communicate openly about sexual matters as well. Thus, self-disclosure about relational issues is related to sexual satisfaction. If a couple has unresolved conflict or experiences a decline in self-disclosure, sexual satisfaction also declines.

Several studies have examined the relationship between sexual self-disclosure and other important relational variables such as satisfaction and commitment. Herold and Way (1988) examined the relationship between sexual self-disclosure, commitment, and self-esteem for 203 unmarried female undergraduates. They pointed out that appropriate self-disclosure can be rewarding to the relationship while inappropriate self-disclosure can be quite costly. The authors were particularly interested in how virgins differed from nonvirgins. They found that nonvirgins disclosed more to their dating partner than virgins. However, frequency of sexual experience was positively related to self-disclosure, suggesting that individuals with more sexual experience were more willing to disclose sexual information to their dating partner. Finally, individuals in committed relationships were more disclosing than individuals in less committed relationships.

Communicating about sexual issues is essential to a couple's sexual satisfaction (Cupach & Comstock, 1990). If a couple is able to communicate about their needs and desires, they are likely more satisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationship. Cupach and Comstock (1990) examined how sexual communication related to satisfaction and adjustment in the relationships of married students. They found that sexual **communication** satisfaction was positively associated with **sexual** satisfaction. Thus, couples who could openly communicate about sexual issues were more satisfied with their sexual relationship. Further analyses revealed that sexual satisfaction accounted for the relationship between sexual communication and marital adjustment.

Byers and Demmons (1999) examined the relationship between sexual self-disclosure, relationship satisfaction, and sexual satisfaction. Fifty-two female and forty-seven male undergraduates participated in their study. The length of relationships ranged

from 3 to 36 months. The participants responded to measures of sexual exchanges, sexual communication satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, sexual self-disclosure, and a global communication measure. Participants reported more disclosure involving nonsexual versus sexually-related topics. Also, when reporting on sexual matters, participants were more likely to share sexual likes than dislikes with their partner. Females reported more self-disclosure than males for both sexual and nonsexual issues. Both sexual and nonsexual disclosure were significantly related to sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, and sexual communication satisfaction. Interestingly, only nonsexual disclosure and partner disclosure predicted sexual disclosure. Thus, sexual disclosure is more likely to occur when one's partner can openly discuss sexual likes and dislikes and both partners can openly discuss other topics. Finally, open communication about sexual matters and nonsexual matters was related to greater relationship and sexual satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that self-disclosure involving sexual and nonsexual matters can enhance other important aspects of the relationship such as general satisfaction with the relationship and sexual satisfaction.

It seems that ability to communicate about sexual matters as well as general communication is important to relationship satisfaction. A couple's ability to discuss issues that are important to the relationship may help them deal effectively with those issues and thus be more satisfied in their relationship. Also, communication can be important to sexual satisfaction. Couples who can openly discuss their sexual likes and dislikes are likely more satisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationship.

Sexual initiation. Sexual initiation can also affect a couple's degree of satisfaction in the relationship. According to Gossman, Julien, Mathieu, and Chartrand

(2002), sexual initiation is an area of conflict for many couples. Sexual initiation can be described as “the first step by one partner to convey verbally and/or non-verbally to the other partner an interest or desire for sexual activity” (p. 169). Dissatisfied couples appear to initiate sex less often and respond to initiation with less interest than satisfied couples. Heterosexual couples ($N = 101$) responded to a variety of measures including sexual initiation, adjustment, sex appeal, and sexual satisfaction. Gossman et al. found that lack of communication intimacy (i.e., one component of sexual initiation) decreases sexual frequency as well as sexual satisfaction. Zest, another aspect of sexual initiation, was related to sexual frequency and satisfaction. Thus, if a partner is able to initiate sex effectively the couple likely has sex more frequently and they are more satisfied with this aspect of their relationship.

As previous research suggests, sex is a vital part of most romantic relationships. The ability to communicate about sexual issues is important to both sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction. Also, initiation of sex that is not refused by one partner can improve satisfaction both sexually and in general. Finally, if a couple is satisfied sexually they are likely satisfied with other aspects of their relationship.

Gender Issues and Sexuality

Research on relational sexuality has often included an examination of gender differences and similarities. One topic that has received considerable attention is gender differences in sexual attitudes.

Previous research has indicated that males and females have different attitudes concerning some issues related to sex. S. Hendrick and Hendrick (1995) examined gender differences and similarities in sexual attitudes and love. They collected data over

three time periods (1988, 1992, and 1993) and found that men had more permissive and instrumental sexual attitudes than women. That is, men were more likely to report that casual sex was okay and to view sex as just a bodily function. Contrary to prediction, women were not more likely to endorse an emotionally focused attitude (i.e., sexual communion) than men. In regards to love attitudes, the authors found that men were more game-playing whereas women were more practical, manic, and friendship-oriented in their love styles.

Similarity of sexual attitudes may be important to the quality of a couple's relationship. Cupach and Metts (1995) examined how similarity in sexual attitudes related to sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, commitment, and communication satisfaction. Sexual attitudes assessed included communion, instrumentality, responsibility, permissiveness, conventionality, and avoidance. Unmarried heterosexual couples ($N = 256$) participated in their study. As predicted, sexual attitudes of partners in a romantic relationship were positively correlated. Thus, partners reported similar sexual attitudes. Contrary to prediction, similarity in sexual attitudes did not vary as a function of relationship length or length of sexual involvement. The authors found some gender differences in regards to how sexual attitudes related to relationship quality. For males, lack of similarity in sexual attitudes was negatively related to sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, communication satisfaction, and commitment. Thus, couples in romantic relationships often share similar sexual attitudes. However, males and females differ in which sexual attitudes are related to satisfaction and commitment.

Other Relational Variables

Conflict and sexuality are important aspects of relationships that are predictive of relationship satisfaction. However, there are other important relational variables that have also received considerable attention in the close relationship literature. Research on self-disclosure, love styles, respect, and commitment will be discussed briefly below.

Self-disclosure

Self-disclosure involves the sharing of intimate and sometimes risky information about oneself with a significant other (Hendrick, 2004). When individuals disclose information, they are no longer holding back but rather revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings. Individuals may have one of several goals when disclosing information. For instance, they may desire disclosure from their significant others, desire to tell others who they really are, or just want to tell a secret.

According to Jourard (1971), hiding information from significant others can be detrimental to relationships with those significant others. He explained that failing to disclose information could seriously affect individuals both emotionally and physically. Thus, there are benefits to disclosing to one's partner, such as increasing satisfaction. For example, past research has shown that disclosure involving both sexual and nonsexual issues increases both relationship satisfaction and sexual satisfaction (Byers & Demmons, 1999; Cupach & Comstock, 1990).

Self-disclosure is significantly related to both individual characteristics and relationship variables. Sprecher and Hendrick (2004) examined these variables for couples in dating relationships. They used a longitudinal design by collecting data five times over several years. Both men and women reported a considerable amount of disclosure at Time 1. Self-disclosure was highly correlated with perceived disclosure

from partner, supporting reciprocity of disclosure. For males, self-disclosure was positively related to self-esteem. However, for females, self-disclosure was related to relationship esteem. That is, females who reported disclosing to their partner also reported overall good feelings toward their relationships. The authors suggested that these relationships indicated that self-disclosure was related to well-being. In terms of the relational variables, self-disclosure and perceived disclosure from partner were positively related to love, commitment, and relationship satisfaction. Thus, self-disclosure is beneficial to the individual and it also enhances the couple's relationship.

Gender differences in self-disclosure have been somewhat inconsistent in the literature. Rubin, Hill, Peplau, and Dunkel-Schetter (1980) were able to address some of these inconsistencies. They found that, overall, males and females disclosed based on expectations of equality. However, some gender differences did emerge. For example, females were more likely to disclose information regarding their parents, friends, and job. Also, females, as compared to males, were more likely to disclose information concerning personal fears and daily accomplishments. Males, on the other hand, were more likely to disclose their political views and aspects of their partner that they found most appealing.

Love Styles

Lee (1973, 1977) proposed a typology of six love styles based on historical and literature reviews as well as empirical evidence. He identified three styles as primary love styles: Eros (passionate love), Ludus (game-playing love), and Storge (friendship love). The three secondary love styles are formed from combining two of the three primary love styles (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Lee, 1977). Mania, or

possessive/dependent love, is formed from the combination of Eros and Ludus. Pragma, or practical love, arises from the combination of Storge and Ludus. Finally, Agape, or selfless love, emerges from the combination of Eros and Storge.

Previous research has examined relational correlates of each of the love styles (C. Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Lee, 1977; Richardson, Hammock, Lubben, & Mickler, 1989). The Eros love style is associated with early physical attraction, intense passion, and strong devotion to the partner. Self-disclosure, commitment, and love are greatly valued by individuals high on this love style. The Ludus love style is characterized by playfulness and permissiveness. The Ludus lover does not experience feelings of commitment and at times can seem manipulative due to the game-playing nature of this style. The Storge love style is related to friendship and affection. This style is characterized by gradual disclosure and equating love with friendship. The Mania lover is possessive and preoccupied with the partner. This style includes emotional intensity, dependency, and obsession. The Pragma style is logical and values characteristics such as education, religion, and age in choosing a partner. Finally, Agape is a selfless love style and is characterized by commitment and personal sacrifices.

The association between love styles and relationship satisfaction has also been assessed. Meeks, Hendrick, and Hendrick (1998) found that Eros, Storge, and Agape were positively related to relationship satisfaction, whereas Ludus, or game-playing love, was negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Thus, individuals who endorse passionate love, friendship love, or selfless love tend to be quite satisfied with their relationships. However, individuals who are more playful and permissive are less satisfied in their romantic relationships.

Richardson et al. (1989) found that the love styles individuals endorsed were related to their conflict responses. One hundred forty-eight undergraduates responded to measures of love attitudes, dating attitudes, and Rahim's (1983) Organizational Conflict Inventory. These conflict styles included: integrating, avoiding, dominating, obliging, and compromising. Integrating involves working to meet both partners' expectations. Avoiding involves actively avoiding discussion of conflict. Dominating involves pushing one's partner. Obliging involves giving in to partner during conflict. Compromising involves finding a middle ground. The authors found that individuals who scored high on Eros (i.e., passionate love) and Agape (i.e., selfless love) more frequently used obliging and integrating strategies to deal with conflict. Individuals who were game-playing (Ludus) in their approach to love reported using domination and avoidance to deal with conflict. The Ludus love style was negatively related to an integrating response likely because these individuals are less committed and unwilling to invest in the relationship. Agape and domination were also significantly negatively related. The authors explained this relationship by suggesting that individuals who love selflessly likely avoid using power to approach conflict with their partners.

Respect

Respect, although an important part of many relationships, has received little attention in the close relationship literature. As Frei and Shaver (2002) pointed out, many researchers mention respect but do not seem to have a clear conceptualization of what respect is and how it relates to other variables. These authors took a first step in trying to overcome these issues. In a series of studies, they attempted to developed a definition of

respect and determine how it related to other variables. Specifically, they wanted to determine if respect was indeed discrete from other variables such as love and liking.

In Study 1, participants responded to open-ended questions assessing various features of respect. Additionally, participants were asked to consider how they defined respect in the context of three relationships: general interpersonal relationships, parent/caregiver relationships, and romantic relationships. Based on the results, Frei and Shaver developed a definition of respect as “an attitudinal disposition toward a close relationship partner who is trustworthy, considerate, and accepting” (p. 125). The authors concluded that this definition held up across a variety of relationships. In Study 2, Frei and Shaver (2002) developed a measure of respect for partner. Finally, in Study 3, the authors found that respect, as compared to love, liking, and attachment was a better predictor of relationship satisfaction. Also, they found a significant positive correlation between liking and respect suggesting that individuals who like their partners also respect their partners.

Although Frei and Shaver’s (2002) study was a good start for understanding respect in close relationships, their definition focused more on “features of a respectworthy relationship” (p. 124). More recently, S. Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) have taken a different focus in developing a measure of respect in romantic relationships. Their theory and measurement of respect includes six dimensions: empowerment, healing, dialogue, curiosity, attention, and self-respect. In a series of studies, they developed the Respect Toward Partner Scale and examined how respect related to other relational variables such as love styles, sexual attitudes, disclosure, relationship satisfaction, and commitment. Specifically, S. Hendrick and Hendrick found positive

correlations between respect and Eros, Storge, and Agape love, as well as with relationship satisfaction and commitment. Thus, individuals who respect their partner tend to be satisfied with their relationship, experience commitment, and have love styles that include passionate (Eros), selfless (Agape), and friendship (Storge) love. Respect was negatively related to the sexual attitudes of permissiveness and instrumentality as well as the game-playing love style (Ludus).

Commitment

Commitment has been defined as one's intention to continue a particular relationship (Lund, 1985). Unlike love, which takes on a more temporal present focus, commitment is a future-oriented aspect of relationships. Commitment tends to appear as a relationship progresses and is less prominent at early stages of the relationships. Lund was interested in the distinction between love and commitment. She developed scales to measure investment and commitment. Additionally, Lund examined romantic relationships of college students both before and after graduation to determine which relational variables predicted relationship breakup. Results indicated that investment increased an individual's commitment and thus predicted continuation of the relationship. Individuals who were not invested in or committed to the relationship were more likely to have broken up after graduation. These results suggest that commitment, as well as investment, may be important in influencing whether a couple stays together or breaks up.

Individual differences variables may affect the relationship between commitment and relationship stability/dissolution. Norris and Zweigenhaft (1999) examined the relationship between self-monitoring, commitment, and trust. Degree of self-monitoring

is related to how an individual approaches dating. High self-monitors tend to report lower commitment than low self-monitors who tend to hold committed attitudes. Also, high self-monitors report having more sexual partners in a given year than low self-monitors. Norris and Zweigenhaft examined couples who were similar and dissimilar in terms of self-monitoring. These authors found that individuals tended to pair up with partners who were similar to themselves. Consistent with previous findings, these authors found that high self-monitors reported involvement in less committed relationships than low self-monitors whose relationships were much more committed.

In summary, commitment seems to be important especially in later stages of relationship development. Commitment is also valuable in predicting whether a relationship will last or terminate and appears to be distinct from love (Lund, 1985). Commitment is related to individual difference variables such as self-monitoring (Norris & Zweigenhaft, 1999) as well as relational variables such as sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction (Pinney et al., 1987; Sprecher, 2002).

In conclusion, conflict and sexuality seem to be very important to other relational variables, especially relationship satisfaction. Communication seems to play an essential role in influencing the conflict resolution strategy an individual chooses and enhancing a couple's sexual relationship. The present series of studies will examine the relationship between conflict and communication (i.e., self-disclosure), relational sexuality, relationship satisfaction, and several other relational variables. Additionally, these studies will be used to develop a new measure of conflict, the Romantic Partner Conflict Scale. The research is guided by several hypotheses.

Appendix B

Consent form for "The Relationship between Conflict, Communication, and Sex"

1. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: "The Relationship between Conflict, Communication, and Sex."
2. The person responsible for this project is Dr. Clyde Hendrick, who can be reached at 742- 3711. You can also contact Tammy Zacchilli who is responsible for carrying out the procedures for the study at 742-3711 ext. 484.
3. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between conflict, communication, sex, and other relationship variables such as love, respect, and satisfaction.
4. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to complete a packet of questionnaires assessing your relationship background, conflict with your partner, sexual communication, self-disclosure, relationship satisfaction, love attitudes, sexual attitudes, and respect.
5. The experiment will take approximately 1 hour to complete.
6. Completing the experiment involves no more risk than you would encounter in your daily life.
7. You will receive one unit of research participation credit. The experimenter will record one unit of credit in the Experimetrix system.
8. Only Dr. Hendrick and his research assistants will see your results. Your results will be in a computer file and assigned a number without your name.
9. Participating in this study is up to you. You can quit at any time and still receive credit for the entire session.
10. Dr. Clyde Hendrick will answer any questions you have about the study. For questions about your rights as a subject or injuries caused by this research, contact the Texas Tech University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, Office of Research Services, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409. Or you can call (806) 742-3884.
11. This consent form is not valid after 1/15/07.

I have read the above and give my consent to participate in this study

_____	_____
_____	Signature
Date	

Appendix C

BACKGROUND INVENTORY

On the answer sheet, please fill in the response that answers the questions accurately for you.

1. I am a: (A) Male (B) Female

2. My ethnic heritage is:
 (A) Asian or Pacific Islander
 (B) African American (Black), not of Hispanic origin
 (C) Mexican-American, Hispanic
 (D) European-American (Anglo)
 (E) Other

3. My age is:
 (A) 19 or less (B) 20-22 (C) 23-30 (D) 31-40 (E) 41 or over

4. The quality of my parent's marriage is/was (if deceased or divorced):
 (A) Very good (B) Good (C) Average (D) Poor (E) Very poor

5. The way I feel about myself generally is:
 (A) Very positive (B) Positive (C) Average (D) Negative (E) Very negative

6. I would describe my life right now as:
 (A) Very happy (B) Happy (C) Okay (D) Unhappy (E) Very unhappy

7. I would describe myself as:
 (A) very outgoing (B) Outgoing (C) Average (D) Quiet (E) very quiet

Appendix D

Love and Relationship Biography

The following questions deal with your personal history and current experience with love and romantic relationships. Please answer each question. Select only one answer per item.

8. Are you currently in a *romantic relationship*?
(A) Yes (B) No

9. If you answered yes, how long have you been in the romantic relationship?
(A) One month or less (B) 1-3 months (C) Three months to a year
(D) over one year (E) Not in a romantic relationship

10. Do you live with your relationship partner?
(A) Yes (B) No (C) Not in a romantic relationship

11. What is your relationship status?
(A) Casual dating (B) Serious dating
(C) Engaged (D) Married
(E) Divorced

12. How often do you see your romantic partner?
(A) Daily or several times a day (B) Every couple of days
(C) Once a week (D) Not often-long distance relationship
(E) Not in romantic relationship

13. How many times have you been in love?
(A) None (B) One (C) Two (D) Three to five (E) More than five

14. Are you in love now? If “yes”, how long?
(A) No
(B) yes, one month or less
(C) Yes, one to three months
(D) Yes, three months to one year
(E) Yes, over one year

15. Have you fallen out of love or had a relationship break up in the last few months?
(A) yes (B) no

16. If you are currently involved in a romantic relationship, is your relationship a sexual relationship?
(A) Not in a relationship
(B) No, it is not sexual
(C) Yes, it is a sexual relationship

17. How many previous sexual relationships have you been involved in?
(A) None (B) One (C) Two (D) Three (E) Four or more
18. How much sexual desire do you currently experience for your partner?
(A) Not in a relationship (B) No sexual desire (C) Very little desire
(D) Moderate desire (E) High sexual desire
19. Is your romantic partner:
(A) Male (B) Female (C) not in a relationship
20. How likely is it that your current relationship will be permanent?
- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------|---|-------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Very unlikely | | Uncertain | | Very likely |
21. How likely is it that you and your partner will be together six months from now?
- | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------|---|-------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Very unlikely | | Uncertain | | Very likely |
22. In your opinion, how committed is your partner to this relationship?
- | | | | | |
|----------|---|---------|---|----------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Not much | | Average | | Very committed |
23. How committed are you to this relationship?
- | | | | | |
|----------|---|---------|---|----------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Not much | | Average | | Very committed |

Appendix E

Relationship Assessment Scale

Please mark on the Scantron the letter for each item which best answers that item for you.

24. How well does your partner meet your needs?

A	B	C	D	E
Poorly		Average		Extremely Well

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

A	B	C	D	E
Unsatisfied		Average		Extremely Satisfied

26. How good is your relationship compared to most?

A	B	C	D	E
Poor		Average		Excellent

27. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Never		Average		Very Often

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

A	B	C	D	E
Hardly at all		Average		Completely

29. How much do you love your partner?

A	B	C	D	E
Not much		Average		Very Much

30. How many problems are there in your relationship?

A	B	C	D	E
Very few		Average		Very many

Appendix F

Love Attitudes Scale

Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about love. For each statement fill in the response on the Scantron answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with the statement. The items refer to a specific love relationship. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your most current partner in mind. If you are not currently dating anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never been in love, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each statement

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral- neither agree nor disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement

31. My partner and I have the right physical “chemistry” between us.
32. I feel that my partner and I were meant for each other.
33. My partner and I really understand each other.
34. My partner fits my ideal standards of physical beauty/handsomeness.
35. I believe that what my partner doesn’t know about me won’t hurt him/her.
36. I have sometimes had to keep my partner from finding out about other lovers.
37. My partner would get upset if he/she knew of some of the things I’ve done with other people.
38. I enjoy playing the “game of love” with my partner and a number of other partners.
39. Our love is the best kind because it grew out of a long friendship.
40. Our friendship merged gradually into love over time.
41. Our love is really a deep friendship, not a mysterious, mystical emotion.

42. Our love relationship is the most satisfying because it developed from a good friendship.
43. A main consideration in choosing my partner was how he/she would reflect on my family.
44. An important factor in choosing my partner was whether or not he/she would be a good parent.
45. One consideration in choosing my partner was how he/she would reflect on my career.
46. Before getting very involved with my partner, I tried to figure out how compatible his/her hereditary background would be with mine in case we ever had children.
47. When my partner doesn't pay attention to me, I feel sick all over.
48. Since I've been in love with my partner, I've had trouble concentrating on anything else.
49. I cannot relax if I suspect that my partner is with someone else.
50. If my partner ignores me for a while, I sometimes do stupid things to try to get his/her attention back.
51. I would rather suffer than let my partner suffer.
52. I cannot be happy unless I place my partner's happiness before my own.
53. I am usually willing to sacrifice my own wishes to let my partner achieve his/hers.
54. I would endure all things for the sake of my partner.
55. If two people are in love, it is natural for them to have sex.

Appendix G

Respect

Feelings of respect are important for many types of social relationships. We are interested in how respect might be related to romantic relationships. Whenever possible, answer the question below with your current partner in mind.

For each statement:

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral- neither agree or disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement

- 56. I respect my partner.
- 57. I am interested in my partner as a person.
- 58. I am a source of “healing” for my partner.
- 59. I honor my partner.
- 60. I approve of the person my partner is.
- 61. I communicate well with my partner.
- 62. My partner respects me.
- 63. My partner is interested in me as a person.
- 64. My partner is a source of “healing” for me.
- 65. My partner honors me.
- 66. My partner approves of the person I am.
- 67. My partner communicates well with me.
- 68. I have self respect.

Appendix H

Sexual Attitudes Scale

Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with that statement. Some of the items refer to a specific sexual relationship, while others refer to general attitudes and beliefs about sex. Whenever possible, answer the questions with your current partner in mind. If you are not currently dating anyone, answer the questions with your most recent partner in mind. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral- neither agree or disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement

- 69. I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.
- 70. Casual sex is acceptable.
- 71. I would like to have sex with many partners.
- 72. One-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.
- 73. It is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.
- 74. Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it.
- 75. The best sex is with no strings attached.
- 76. Life would have fewer problems if people could have sex more freely.
- 77. It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.
- 78. It is okay for sex to be just good physical release.
- 79. Birth control is part of responsible sexuality.
- 80. A woman should share responsibility for birth control.
- 81. A man should share responsibility for birth control.
- 82. Sex is the closest form of communication between two people.

83. A sexual encounter between two people deeply in love is the ultimate human interaction.
84. At its best, sex seems to be the merging of two souls.
85. Sex is a very important part of life.
86. Sex is usually an intensive, almost overwhelming experience.
87. Sex is best when you let yourself go and focus on your own pleasure.
88. Sex is primarily the taking of pleasure from another person.
89. The main purpose of sex is to enjoy oneself.
90. Sex is primarily physical.
91. Sex is primarily a bodily function, like eating.

Appendix I

Communication

Listed below are several statements that reflect different approaches to interpersonal communication. For each statement fill in the response on the answer sheet that indicates how much you agree or disagree with that statement as it applies to your own behavior. For each statement:

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral- neither agree or disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement

I HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS TO A LOVE PARTNER

- 92. My personal habits.
- 93. Things I have done which I feel guilty about.
- 94. Things I wouldn't do in public.
- 95. My deepest feelings.
- 96. What I like and dislike about myself.
- 97. What is important to me in life.
- 98. What makes me the person I am.
- 99. My worst fears.
- 100. Things I have done which I am proud of.
- 101. My close relationships with other people.

Appendix J

Romantic Partner Conflict Scale

Think about how you handle conflict with your romantic partner. Specifically, think about a **significant** conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. Using the scale below, fill in which response is most like how you handled conflict. If you do not have a romantic partner, respond with your most current partner in mind. If you have never been in a romantic relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

For each item, answer as follows:

- A = Strongly agree with statement
- B = Moderately agree with statement
- C = Neutral, neither agree nor disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with statement
- E = Strongly disagree with statement

- 102. We try to find solutions that are acceptable to both of us.
- 103. We often resolve conflict by talking about the problem.
- 104. Our conflicts usually end when we reach a compromise.
- 105. When my partner and I disagree, we consider both sides of the argument.
- 106. In order to resolve conflicts, we try to reach a compromise.
- 107. Compromise is the best way to resolve conflict between my partner and me.
- 108. My partner and I negotiate to resolve our disagreements.
- 109. I try to meet my partner halfway to resolve a disagreement.
- 110. The best way to resolve conflict between me and my partner is to find a middle ground.
- 111. When we disagree, we try to find a solution that satisfies both of us.
- 112. When my partner and I have conflict, we collaborate so that we are both happy with our decision.
- 113. My partner and I collaborate to find a common ground to solve problems between us.

114. We collaborate to come up with the best solution for both of us when we have a problem.
115. We try to collaborate so that we can reach a joint solution to a conflict.
116. My partner and I try to avoid arguments.
117. I avoid disagreements with partner.
118. I avoid conflict with my partner.
119. When my partner and I disagree, we argue loudly.
120. Our conflicts usually last quite awhile.
121. My partner and I have frequent conflicts.
122. I suffer a lot from conflict with my partner.
123. I become verbally abusive to my partner when we have conflict.
124. My partner and I often argue because I do not trust him/her.
125. When we argue, I am easily frustrated.
126. When we have conflict, I usually feel hurt.
127. Conflict with my partner often causes strong emotions.
128. When we have conflict, we withdraw from each other for awhile for a “cooling off” period.
129. When we disagree, we try to separate for awhile so we can consider both sides of the argument.
130. When we experience conflict, we let each other cool off before discussing it further.
131. When we have conflict, we separate but expect to deal with it later.
132. Separation for a period of time can work well to let our conflicts cool down.
133. When we argue or fight, I try to win.
134. I try to take control when we argue.

- 135. I rarely let my partner win an argument.
- 136. When we disagree, my goal is to convince to my partner that I am right.
- 137. When we argue, I let my partner know I am in charge.
- 138. When we have conflict, I try to push my partner into choosing the solution that I think is best.
- 139. When we have conflict, I usually give in to my partner.
- 140. I give in to my partner's wishes to settle arguments on my partner's terms.
- 141. Sometimes I agree with my partner so the conflict will end.
- 142. When we argue, I usually try to satisfy my partner's needs rather than my own.
- 143. I surrender to my partner when we disagree on an issue.

144. How similar are you and your partner in the way you handle conflict?

A	B	C	D
E			
Completely similar Different		Somewhat similar	Extremely

Appendix K

**Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics
Self-Rated**

Think about the most recent conflict you experienced with your romantic partner. Please indicate how each item describes your behavior by using the following scale. Specifically, think about a **significant** conflict issue that you and your partner have disagreed about recently. If the statement does not apply, please fill in E on the scantron. Please recall your own behavior and respond to each of the following items honestly.

For each statement:

- A = Very true of me
- B = Quite a bit true of me
- C = Moderately true of me
- D = A little bit true of me
- E = Not at all true of me

- 145. I tried to change the subject.
- 146. I compromised with him/her.
- 147. I calmly discussed the issue.
- 148. I avoided him/her.
- 149. I showed concern about his/her feelings and thoughts.
- 150. I used threats.
- 151. I avoided the issue.
- 152. I explored solutions with him/her.
- 153. I criticized an aspect of his/her personality.
- 154. I sought a mutually beneficial solution.
- 155. I shouted at him/her.
- 156. I tried to postpone the issue as long as possible.
- 157. I reasoned with him/her in a give and take manner.
- 158. I tried to make him/her feel guilty.

159. I changed the topic of discussion.
160. I expressed my trust in him/her.
161. I was sympathetic to his/her position.
162. I blamed him/her for causing the conflict.
163. I teased him/her.
164. I was hostile.
165. I ignored the issue.
166. I showed that I lost my temper.
167. I talked about abstract things instead of the conflict issue.
168. I accepted my fair share of responsibility for the conflict.
169. I criticized his/her behavior.
170. I focused on the meaning of the words more than the conflict issue.
171. I tried to understand him/her.
172. I tried to intimidate him/her.
173. I ignored his/her thoughts and feelings.
174. I told him/her how to behave in the future.
175. I denied that there was any problem or conflict.
176. I was sarcastic in my use of humor.
177. I kept my partner guessing what was really on my mind.
178. I avoided the issue by focusing on how we were arguing instead of what we were arguing about.
179. I blamed the conflict on an aspect of his/her personality.
180. I explained why there was no problem at all.

Appendix L

Dyadic Sexual Communication Scale

The purpose of this scale is to examine how individuals and their partners communicate about sex. Please read and respond to each statement with your current partner in mind.

For each statement:

- A = Strongly agree with the statement
- B = Moderately agree with the statement
- C = Neutral- neither agree or disagree
- D = Moderately disagree with the statement
- E = Strongly disagree with the statement

- 181. My partner rarely responds when I want to talk about our sex life.
- 182. Some sexual matters are too upsetting to discuss with my sexual partner.
- 183. There are sexual issues of problems in our sexual relationship that we have never discussed.
- 184. My partner and I never seem to resolve our disagreements about sexual issues.
- 185. Whenever my partner and I talk about sex, I feel like she or he is lecturing me.
- 186. My partner often complains that I am not very clear about what I want sexually.
- 187. My partner and I have never had a heart-to-heart talk about our sex life together.
- 188. My partner has no difficulty in talking to me about his or her sexual feelings and desires.
- 189. Even when angry with me, my partner is able to appreciate my views on sexuality.
- 190. Talking about sex is a satisfying experience for both of us.
- 191. My partner and I can usually talk calmly about our sex life.
- 192. I have little difficulty in telling my partner what I do or don't do sexually.
- 193. I seldom feel embarrassed when talking about the details of our sex life with my partner.

Appendix M

Sociosexual Orientation Inventory

Please answer all of the following questions honestly, both the questions dealing with behavior and the questions dealing with thoughts and attitudes.

194. With how many different partners have you had sex (sexual intercourse) within the past year?

- | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|---------------|--------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Zero | One | Two | Three to Four | Five or more |

195. How many different partners do you foresee yourself having sex with during the next five years? (*Please give a specific, realistic estimate*)

- | | | | | |
|------|-----|--------------|-------------|----------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Zero | One | Two or Three | Four to ten | Eleven or more |

196. With how many different partners have you had sex on *one and only one* occasion?

- | | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|---------------|--------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Zero | One | Two | Three or Four | Five or more |

197. How often do you fantasize about having sex with someone other than your current dating partner?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. Never | D. Once every 2 or 3 <u>days</u> |
| B. Once every 2 or 3 <u>months</u> | E. Once or more every day |
| C. Once every 2 or 3 <u>weeks</u> | |

For each statement:

- A = Strongly disagree with the statement
- B = Moderately disagree with the statement
- C = Neutral-neither agree or disagree
- D = Moderately agree with the statement
- E = Strongly agree with the statement

198. Sex without love is OK.

199. I can imagine myself being comfortable and enjoying “casual” sex with different partners.

200. I would have to be closely attached to someone (both emotionally and psychologically) before I could feel comfortable and fully enjoy having sex with him or her.

Appendix N

Self-Esteem

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please use the scale below when responding to each statement.

- A = Strongly Agree
- B = Agree
- C = Disagree
- D = Strongly Disagree

- 201. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
- 202. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- 203. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
- 204. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
- 205. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
- 206. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
- 207. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
- 208. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
- 209. I certainly feel useless at times
- 210. At times, I think I am no good at all.

211. Overall, how do you feel about yourself?

- | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---------|---|-----------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Very Poor | | Average | | Very Good |

212. I have high self-esteem

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| A | B | C | D | E |
| Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

Thank you for participating!!!

Appendix O

Debriefing

Conflict is a common part of almost all relationships and romantic relationships are no exception. Sometimes couples may resolve conflict easily while other times resolving conflicts can take a lot of time. There are both good and bad ways to deal with conflict. The way a couple handles conflict can influence other areas of their relationship such as relationship satisfaction and love. For example, if a couple chooses to compromise when faced with a conflict, they may also be more satisfied with their relationship. However, if a couple responds to conflict with anger, or if one partner tries to dominate the other, they may become more dissatisfied with their relationship.

If you have experienced problems in your relationship and would like to seek help from a counselor, please consider calling one of the following.

TTU Psychology Clinic

Telephone: (806) 742-3737

Email: psychology.clinic@ttu.edu

TTU Student Counseling Center

(806) 742- 3674