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# Perceived Effectiveness of Conflict Management Strategies in Dating Relationships

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of Psychology  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Psychology

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by  
Jaime A. Counts  
December 2003

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Keywords: conflict management strategies, dating relationships, male and female satisfaction

## ABSTRACT

### Perceived Effectiveness of Conflict Management Strategies in Dating Relationships

by

Jaime A. Counts

The purpose of the present study was to determine how college participants view the success of different conflict management strategies: chance, manipulation, compliance, and confrontation. The success of the conflict management strategies was evaluated by how participants rated female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage. A MANOVA and a Roy Bargman step-down procedure were conducted on all dependent variables. A Tukey HSD post hoc test was ran to reveal which conflict management strategies differed from one another. Results indicated that participants thought women were less satisfied than men. For male satisfaction and likelihood of marriage, post hoc testing on the conflict management strategies revealed using compliance was the most satisfying. On the success of marriage variable, participants rated men higher than women on the manipulation and confrontation strategies. The results of the study may be useful in understanding conflict management in dating couples.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

People engage in many different social roles. A person can be a mother or a father, a husband or a wife, a sister or a brother, a child, a friend, or a lover. Each of these relationships is based on the concept of reciprocity (Heath, 1976). A reciprocal relationship involves an exchange of something like an expression of love and it creates a bond between two people. In dating relationships, immediate reciprocity is not necessary, but it should eventually take place for marriage to be considered. If the desired exchange does not take place, conflict may eventually emerge to disrupt the relationship. Himes (1980) refers to conflict as a struggle over claims to status, and power in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, or eliminate their rivals. During dating relationships, the more interested the two parties are in one another, the more inevitable the conflict and the added pressure on the relationship (Burgess & Huston, 1979). The ending of a relationship is always costly because of the amount of time, commitment, and emotional energy the two people have invested into the maintenance of it. This makes conflict management an important tactic in any relationship.

Borisoff and Victor (1989) propose five steps to conflict management. The first step is assessment. This happens when the couple looks at the problem situation and decides on how to deal with it. The second step is acknowledgment. Partners need to recognize the other person's perspective. The third step is attitude. People need to have a supportive attitude and willingness to manage conflict. The fourth step is action. The couple needs to know how to reduce conflict.

The fifth and final step is analysis. Couples need to review the success of their decision and action in managing conflict. These steps to conflict management become useful because there seems to be common areas of conflict all couples experience in their relationships.

### Common Areas of Conflict

Beck (1988) has identified some common areas of conflict between couples. The first area of conflict mentioned is the disagreement concerning the amount of quality time spent together. If both people work or go to school, it can be difficult to find time to spend with one another. Also, if the couple has children, a great deal of time may revolve around the children's needs and who will be responsible for those needs. A second area of conflict is child rearing disagreements. Couples may disagree on how and when to discipline their children. One partner may be strict and believe in physical punishment while the other person may be more lenient and against physical punishment. A third area of conflict is the division of household tasks. Both the husband and wife may work outside the home, but the wife may still do the majority of the housework and child rearing. She may expect her husband to do more to help raise the children and keep the house clean. Perhaps the couple could work out a schedule and divide the housework. The wife may explain to her husband that she wants him to take a more active role with the children, such as, tucking them into bed at night.

Rahim (1990) contributes two more areas of conflict between couples. The first area mentioned is the lack of or poor communication. Sometimes people spend time together and expect their partners to know how they feel and what they are trying to say. They fail to explain their thoughts, feelings, and expectations effectively to their partner. When their partner misinterprets these thoughts, feelings, and expectations, conflict can occur. The second area of

conflict is differences in personality. When the personalities of couples clash, conflict may follow. For example, one partner may be outgoing and very open about his or her feelings while the other partner enjoys staying at home and does not feel comfortable discussing his or her feelings. Couples experience these different types of conflict every day because conflict is inevitable in dating relationships

### Conflict is Inevitable

Conflict is inevitable because people grow and change as they mature (Kottler, 1994). Rahim (1990) stated that people's perceptions may change over time which can also cause conflict. Deutsch (1973) added to the idea of how perceptions influence conflict. He stated that perceptions are more important than the actual problems because it is these perceptions that motivate conflict. Two different people may have completely different perspectives and expectations about the outcome of a situation. According to Secord, Backman, and Slavitt (1976), this incompatibility can be physical, social, or psychological. When couples disagree, each person has the tendency to believe that the argument is not his or her fault. He or she believes it is the other person's fault and he or she is a victim of the argument. Conflict may be inevitable, but it can be managed successfully.

It is important that conflict within a relationship be well handled (Rahim, 1990). Once the source of a conflict has been clearly identified, couples need to seek out the best approach to deal with it (Borisoff & Victor, 1989). Once again, Rahim (1990) stated people's perceptions may affect what they believe to be the best approach for solving conflict. Perceptions are often influenced by the interpretations of people for what are the positive and negative aspects of a relationship. According to Maccoby (1966), people tend to reward others who contribute to the

positive aspects of a relationship. What satisfies one person in the relationship may not be satisfactory to the other person. Winstead, Valerian, and Rose (1997) have stated a woman tends to be more satisfied when her partner openly expresses his feelings while a man is more satisfied when he is not pushed into open discussion of his feelings. This contributes to the amount of conflict couples experience. Couples need to reduce the amount of conflict experienced before the relationship dissolves.

### How to Reduce Conflict

Burgess and Huston (1979) gave some insight on how to manage conflict. They stated, “Conflict resolution occurs when there is a renegotiation of obligations and gratifications.” For management or resolution to begin, the couple must communicate effectively. The couple may talk about the causes of the disagreement and about the importance of expressing his or her viewpoint on the best way to handle the disagreement. The couple could take the best aspects of each viewpoint and combine them and they could decide to act on ideas they suggested. If the communication is successful, the degree of commitment is strengthened within the relationship. If the communication is not successful, the relationship could end. There are a number of conflict management strategies that could either strengthen or help end a dating relationship.

### Positive Conflict Management Strategies

According to Lloyd (1987), patterns of conflict management may be formed long before the couple even thinks about getting married. People form these patterns at an early age and base them on their experiences. During conflict, people often have differing views on how to best manage the situation.

According to Rahim (1990), certain techniques may become necessary if successful

management is to be obtained. The first technique is cooperation. Mutually agreed upon goals help with constructive conflict management. It allows couples to communicate with one another. It is important for people to realize what behaviors work in reducing conflict. Heath (1976) stated that cooperation is a necessary tool in conflict management. The more inflexible each partner is, the harder it will be to manage conflict.

According to Heath (1976), the second technique is negotiation. The couple may want to assume a give and take attitude. The man in the relationship may want the disagreement to go in his favor, but he may also be willing to give his partner something she wants. This technique becomes helpful when the couple disagrees, but they do not want to fight. They may use this in a disagreement when they believe fighting is necessary because it could damage their relationship.

Winstead et al. (1997) discussed a third technique for positive conflict management. They suggested one could try to increase the rewards of the relationship. Focusing on the rewards may help a person remain content with the relationship when conflict management does not go in his or her favor. A study conducted by them helped identify some of the rewards and costs in a relationship. The most frequently mentioned reward in the study was companionship. Others included, sexual satisfaction, feeling loved, and intimacy. Two of the major costs of a relationship were lack of freedom to socialize and lack of freedom to date. According to Heath (1976), people also find blame as a cost in the relationship. One individual should not accept all the blame as to why circumstances did not turn out differently. If one individual is accepting all the blame, the cost of the relationship may become too high. When couples balance accepting the positive (reward) to negative (cost) aspects in a relationship, satisfaction improves and the amount of conflict decreases (Brehm, Kassin, and Fein, 1999). Relationship satisfaction can be described as each partner having

equal power, emotional support, and being content with the relationship.

According to Brehm et al. (1999), a fourth technique is understanding your partner's point of view about the situation. The person should try and evaluate the conflict in terms of how his or her partner would view it. Couples may want to be empathic with their partner. It could be helpful to them to place themselves in their partner's shoes, that is, to look at their perspective on the disagreement. If this can be accomplished, then there is a greater chance of successful conflict management. Successful management of conflict increases the duration, satisfaction, and commitment experienced in the relationship.

According to Brehm et al. (1999), a relationship is more healthy when both partners use similar tactics to deal with conflict. A positive, equitable tactic is preferable when dealing with conflict management. If people find the relationship equitable, they are more likely to try and preserve it. On the other hand, if conflict cannot be successfully managed., the preservation of the couple's relationship may be harmed and eventually it could end.

#### Negative Conflict Management Strategies

The conflict management strategies mentioned in the previous paragraphs are more favorable when dealing with conflict. If they are successful, the intimacy, level of commitment, and duration of the relationship could increase. However, some conflict management strategies could harm a romantic relationship. When these are employed within a relationship, both people can become dissatisfied with their partner. If the dissatisfaction becomes too great, the relationship could dissolve and the people could go their separate ways. Below are some conflict management strategies that could be potentially harmful to a couple's relationship. These are: compliance, manipulation, and confrontation.

According to Borisoff and Victor (1989), the first negative conflict management strategy is compliance. For people concerned about the quality of their relationship, compliance might be rewarding. People portraying this style have a tendency to give in to their partner's needs and wants. A compliant type of conflict management strategy is highly cooperative and not very assertive. Compliance from one individual in the relationship makes the other person feel better about the situation, but in order to be truly compliant, one has to give away the power to his or her partner (Schilling, 2003)

According to Metz and Rosser (1994), when reporting their own conflict management style, men say they are more compliant than their partners. According to Duane (1989), men do not enjoy engaging in confrontations with their partners, so they have a tendency to be more avoiding or compliant when dealing with conflict. Tezer (1996) made the statement implying that regardless of the stereotype about women being the weaker sex, they use compliance the least frequently when interacting with their spouses. Giving in to a person all of time is one way to keep conflict at a minimum, but it may not lead to a long-term healthy relationship. Eventually, the partner being compliant gets frustrated because he or she is always giving up the power to his or her partner. When the frustration increases, the satisfaction with a partner decreases.

Borisoff and Victor (1989) stated a second negative conflict management strategy was manipulation. A manipulative conflict management strategy makes an individual more concerned with his or her own needs and wants regardless of the expense to that individual's partner. According to Beck (1988), when making decisions one person can take the dominant, manipulative role and the other person may take a more submissive, compliant role. If this dominance is successful, the person is likely to continue this behavior. The manipulative individual may resort to

threats to obtain what he or she wants. According to Kottler (1994), this manipulative strategy may seem to work initially, but Schilling (2003) stated that eventually it could lead to a greater amount of conflict between the couple

According to Hojjat (2000), women reported the usage of manipulation more often than their spouses. When researching this conflict management strategy, both men and women reported lower relationship satisfaction with the usage of manipulation. Women reported less satisfaction when using this strategy and men reported less satisfaction when on the receiving end of manipulation. Borisoff and Victor (1989) added to this finding. According to them, both individuals receiving and engaging in manipulation are likely to become frustrated or dissatisfied with their relationship.

Kurdeck (1995) mentions confrontation as a third negative conflict management style. A confrontational conflict management style, however, can be the least satisfactory to a couple in a romantic relationship. It is one of the most negative conflict management styles a person can use. According to Feldman and Gowen (1998), confrontation is not healthy because it involves escalating negative behaviors. Dissatisfied couples or individuals portray a more confrontational conflict management style than satisfied couples or individuals. Roberts (2000) stated that confrontation can play a role in dissolving a relationship or marriage when the amount of dissatisfaction becomes too high.

Who tends to be more confrontational in romantic relationships? According to Lloyd (1987), women generally tend to be more confrontational than men. Women also tend to see themselves as more confrontational than their partners. Women are more likely to confront their partners to deal with conflict face to face (Hojjat, 2000). Men like to avoid conflict because they



experience anxiety and dissatisfaction if they have to confront their spouse (Mackey & O'Brien, 1998). According to Metz and Rosser (1994), a husband is more satisfied if his wife uses a compliant conflict management strategy instead of a confrontational conflict management strategy. The more confrontation a wife has to use with her husband, the less satisfied she becomes in her relationship (Tezer, 1996).

According to Winstead et al. (1997), early in relationships, men spend more time and effort in maintaining them whereas later on women spend more time and effort in the maintenance of relationships. Most people spend their time "in" a relationship trying to maintain it. They spend less time trying to begin or end a relationship. According to Kottler (1994), when two people get married the level of commitment is extremely high. The amount of conflict increases as the level of commitment increases. When someone experiences conflict with an individual he or she loves, that individual tries to make excuses for the partner's behavior. If a person can come up with a rational explanation for his or her partner's behavior, then it makes the behavior easier to handle. People tend to attribute the behavior to external, situational factors instead of believing the behavior is an internal aspect of their partner's personality. As the relationship continues, a person's maintenance behaviors become more routine. The person relies upon previous experiences to help maintain a relationship.

As stated above, conflict management becomes very important as the relationship develops. According to Deutsch (1973), married couples with similar beliefs and attitudes can deal with conflict more productively. They may have similar ideas on the most productive way to deal with a situation. A common goal could be to maintain a loving relationship in spite of occasional conflict. Burgess and Huston (1979) stated that one popular way to maintain a relationship is to

revive the mutual feelings of attraction. One way to revive these feelings could be to schedule a romantic dinner with one another at least one night a week. Despite trying to revive these feelings, sometimes this strategy is not successful. When one can not revive the attraction for a partner, dissatisfaction with the relationship may occur.

According to Borisoff and Victor (1989), dissatisfaction in one area of a relationship normally leads to trouble in other areas. When a person is not happy, he or she may look for problems to justify the unhappiness. When problems do arise, a demand-withdrawal pattern of behavior occurs. Dissatisfied people within a relationship may become defensive towards their partners and their attitude may be met with resistance. As stated by Beck (1988), when a wife is dissatisfied in her marriage, she expects her husband to talk and share his feelings about their relationship. The wife may feel rejected when the husband does not want to express his feelings. She pushes her husband to talk and he continues to withdraw from her demands. In general, men in the relationship tend to withdraw and women tend to become more demanding (Winstead, Valerian, and Rose, 1997). The longer the conflict continues the more demanding women become and this tends to make men withdraw even more than they did when the conflict first arose. Regardless of the amount of conflict and dissatisfaction experienced in a relationship, some people choose to stay with their partners.

So, why would an individual stay in a failing relationship? According to Burgess and Huston (1979), some individuals equate relationship failure with personal failure. Failure in a relationship is due to some flaw in the individual's personal character. Another reason may be because a person may not want to start over with a new partner. This could be for various reasons. One, the person may believe he or she has invested too much time and energy in the

current relationship. Also, the person may believe he or she is simply too old to start a new relationship

### Gender Differences in Conflict Management and Satisfaction

According to Maccoby (1966), from an early age, adults push boys and girls into appropriate gender roles. Girls have traditionally been rewarded more for dependent behaviors and boys have been rewarded more for assertive behaviors. This includes how boys and girls are supposed to behave in intimate relationships. Winstead et al. (1997) stated early in a relationship, men's and women's behavior is influenced by gender scripts. Traditionally, women possessed an enabling or compliant style. They had a tendency to support whatever their partner was doing to keep the interactions going. They portrayed an agreeable, take your turn attitude towards the relationship. Research stated previously, such as, Hojjat (2000) and Mackey and O'Brien (1998), seem to contradict this traditional viewpoint. They have stated that women are more confrontational in relationships and men are more avoiding or compliant. Women seem to spend more time on conflict management (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2000). They try to do what is necessary to maintain a relationship. This could be one reason why they try to talk to their spouse to get at the root of conflict. According to Winstead et al. (1997), men have a tendency to try to shorten or end the interaction.

Other gender differences seem to emerge when researching relationships. Winstead et al. (1997) stated men tend to report sexual gratification as important in a relationship, whereas sexual gratification is not as important to women. Women tend to mention positive self-esteem, higher self-respect, and confidence more often than men. Women also tended to express their feelings about their partners more often than men. Men experience these feelings, they just rarely express

them. Women tend to be more satisfied if their partners express emotion

Maccoby (1966) stated women tend to be more verbally aggressive than men. Women like to talk about their conflicts because they believe it helps maintain a relationship while men believe discussing conflict could hinder a relationship (Beck, 1988). Hendrick and Hendrick (2000) agree that men like to avoid conflict.

According to Schumm, Webb, and Bollman (1998), when it comes to relationship satisfaction, in general women tend to report less satisfaction than men. In married couples, almost twice as many wives report lower degrees of satisfaction with their relationship than their husbands report. Metz and Rosser (1994) stated that in addition to women reporting less satisfaction in their current relationships, they also have lower expectations for satisfaction in future relationships. As stated earlier, satisfaction decreases with the usage of negative conflict management strategies (Kurdeck, 1995). Research shows that women are more likely to use manipulation and confrontation as their conflict management strategies towards their partners (Hojjat, 2000). Schilling (2003) stated that these negative strategies seem to work for awhile, but eventually they enhance conflict. As a woman's satisfaction decreases, she tends to become more confrontational towards her partner. Mackey and O'Brien (1998) stated they more confrontational she becomes towards her partner, the more avoiding he becomes when she tries to talk out their differences. The more she pushes her husband to talk, the more he avoids the issue and the less satisfied they both become with the relationship (Kurdeck, 1995). This pattern of interaction can leave both individuals dissatisfied with the relationship and they may drift apart. Eventually this pattern could cause the relationship to dissolve and the individuals could go their separate ways. Certain theorists have tried to come up with explanations for how people can successfully interact

with one another to enhance a relationship.

### Theories of Conflict Management

Equity theory and social exchange theory have been used to help describe relationship satisfaction and conflict management in married and dating couples. These two theories were originally developed to explain the success of economical relationships between two or more businesses. John Stacey Adams used his equity theory to describe the workplace. Elaine Walster was a social psychologist who wanted to know if these concepts could be adapted to explain personal relationships. This theory helped begin research on the success of intimate, personal relationships among couples.

#### Equity Theory

Adams' Equity Theory. One of the predominate theorists for equity theory was Adams (1963). He developed his own theory of equity which dealt with employees in the workplace and their motivation to work. Adams described job equity as a need to balance one's inputs and outputs. People form their own perception about what is fair. Friends, partners, co-workers, and anyone in a social setting help influence this perception of fairness.

A person achieves equity when his or her outcomes divided by his or her inputs are equal to someone else's outcomes over inputs. Inputs include loyalty, hard work, personal sacrifice, and tolerance. Outputs include finances, recognition, thanks, and a sense of achievement. When a person's outputs and inputs are perceived as equitable, he or she is more happy at the workplace and is motivated to work harder. When the input is perceived to be greater than the output, a person becomes less motivated to work and tension becomes apparent with other workers. When this occurs, people are motivated to reduce the tension.

In a workplace, for there to be equity, a person's inputs and outputs must equal other workers' inputs and outputs. A person can see if a relationship is equitable by placing the workers' outcomes and inputs into a simple equation. The equation is:  $\text{Outcomes A} / \text{Inputs A} = \text{Outcomes B} / \text{Inputs B}$ . When these two are equal, the relationship within the workplace is perceived as equitable and the people working are motivated to work harder. When either A or B is greater, the workplace is not perceived as equitable and tension between the workers can occur. When tension is experienced, workers are less motivated. According to Adams, in order to restore the equity, people must focus on what inequities are present. Maybe worker A is doing twice the work as worker B. This would cause worker A to be unhappy and he or she may feel some stress. Equity needs to be restored, so that both workers are happy and motivated to do their jobs. These people need to pay attention to the motivational factors so that equity can be restored as quickly as possible.

This theory relates to the current study because people strive for equity or a sense of fairness in romantic relationships. When individuals are not satisfied with their relationship, they are not as motivated to work to restore the satisfaction. Dissatisfaction tends to occur when people believe they are putting more into the relationship than what they are getting out of it. This can lead to conflict that needs to be managed before the relationship dissolves.

Walster's Equity Theory . After Adams' theory was well known in job motivation, some theorists wanted to take his concept and apply it to personal relationships. Walster, Walster, and Berscheid (1978) were theorists who applied equity theory to close relationships (e.g. husbands and wives). Walster et al. came up with four points concerning equity and personal relationships. One, in interpersonal relationships, people try to maximize their outputs. Two, people can develop

systems so that equity can be maximized. People who behave in an equitable manner are rewarded and those who behave in an inequitable manner are punished. Three, when people are in an inequitable relationship, it is stressful to them. Four, people will try to do what is necessary to reduce the stress.

Walster et al. (1978) stated that people in close relationships wanted to maintain equity in them. They stated people compare their inputs and outputs to their partner's inputs and outputs. Inputs are also described as contributions. They can be positive or negative. A positive input would be love or understanding. A negative input would be not helping around the house or being critical of one's partner. Outputs are the consequences of one's actions. These can also be positive or negative. A positive output would be appreciation or praise for something completed. A negative output would be having less money to spend on oneself because the person is spending money on his or her partner. Walster et al. also stated that equity was based on a person's perception of the relationship. People want to see if what they put into the relationship compares to what they get out of the relationship.

People tend to seek out relationships that will benefit them. They want to be satisfied with their partner. When people view the relationship as fair, they reward their partners by expressing love. If the relationship is viewed as inequitable, people experience tension. This tension can lead to dissatisfaction with a partner or with the relationship in general. It is important for couples to develop conflict management strategies that can help reduce tension. When tension is reduced, satisfaction with a partner can start to increase.

Other Viewpoints on Equity Theory. Other theorists have added their own viewpoints on equity theory. Some state that equity theory implies people are most content with a relationship

when the ratio between what they get out of the relationship and what they put into it are similar for both partners (Brehm, Kassin, and Fein, 1999). Equity does not mean the same thing as equality. Isaacs (1998) helps distinguish between equality and equity. He defined equality as “everyone receiving an equal share regardless of the contribution.” Equity can be defined as “giving rewards in proportion to those received or expected to be received.” Equity implies balance. One person can contribute more to the relationship and the relationship can still be equitable as long as that person benefits more from the relationship than his or her partner.

Who decides when a relationship is equitable? According to Burgess and Huston (1979), “Equity is in the eye of the beholder.” As long as the people in the relationship view it as equitable, they will be more satisfied with a relationship. The more satisfied a person is in a romantic relationship, the more likely he or she will stay in the relationship for a longer time period. This satisfaction will likely make the relationship more stable over time. It has been stated by Burgess and Huston that the more equitable a dating relationship is and the more equitable it remains over time, the more likely the couple will get married. Therefore, relationships should become more equitable as greater commitment is made between the couple.

According to Burgess and Huston (1979), when a relationship is perceived as inequitable one or both partners may experience distress. When distress emerges, the person will try to restore equity. This need for balance (equity) may be real or psychological. To help reduce this distress the person can do one of three things. First, the person can work to make the relationship more equitable. Second, the person can convince himself or herself that the relationship is more equitable than it actually is. Third, the person can end the relationship.

Burgess and Huston (1979) also think equity does not have to matter if couples truly love



one another. To them, a truly satisfying relationship is one where both individuals stop counting the rewards. Also, both individuals care for the other person's pleasure as much as they do their own pleasure. They also claim partners will love one other no matter how one of them behaves in the relationship. It has been noted that as two people become more intimate in a relationship, the bond goes beyond simple exchange. Partners become more concerned with what they can do for one another instead of what they can get from one another.

Based on these ideas, the current study looks to see which conflict management strategies are perceived as more effective. Do people use strategies that are more equitable or do they tend to use strategies that are the most beneficial to them? It is believed that individuals will choose conflict management strategies that are more beneficial to the success of the relationship than to the individuals themselves.

### Social Exchange Theory

Social behavior is an exchange of valuable rewards (Homans, 1961). Burgess and Huston (1979) defined social exchange as a form of interaction where two or more people provide each other with services or activities each finds rewarding. According to Rahim (1990) people bring expectations into interactions with others about their desired outcomes and how these expectations can be obtained. A person is attracted to another person if he or she expects the association with the other person to be rewarding. The people within the exchange develop interconnected relationships because each person has something the other person wants or needs. This interaction allows each person to profit from the association.

Heath (1976) stated trust is required from the people making the social exchange. The individuals trust the relationship will be rewarding. When a person makes a response, he or she is

rewarded or punished by the other person's response to the exchange. As long as the exchange remains rewarding, the relationship will continue to develop. Adequate rewards depend upon the couple's expectations about the relationship (Secord, Backman, and Slavitt, 1976).

Homans' Viewpoint on Social Exchange. Homans was one of the founding fathers of exchange theory. A central theme to his theory is a combination of psychological and economical needs. According to Homans (1961), a person strives to gain rewards from a relationship while avoiding costs and punishment in a relationship. He developed five concepts about social exchange. First, if past activities have been rewarded, the more similar the current activity is to the past, the more likely a person will engage in the current activity. Second, the more a person's activity rewards another, the more the other person will engage in the activity. Third, the more a person is reinforced by the activity of another, the more he or she will engage in the activity. Fourth, the more often a person is rewarded from the activity of another, the less valuable the activity becomes over time. Fifth, the less justice that occurs within the relationship, the more anger is displayed.

Homans (1961) stated no exchange would continue to take place unless both parties were making a profit. A profit is equal to the rewards in the relationship minus the costs of the relationship. When the exchange becomes unprofitable, the person who deems it so may withdraw from the relationship. The relationship may become unprofitable because the costs outweigh the rewards. Punishment can be the same as costs. The punishment could be psychological. One or both of the people in the relationship is being deprived of the rewards of the relationship.

Other Viewpoints on Social Exchange. Heath (1976) stated social exchange theory implies people are motivated to increase the benefits and to decrease the costs of maintaining relationships

with others. Benefits include love, companionship, gratification, and consolation. Costs include the amount of work it takes to maintain the relationship, conflict, compromise, and the sacrifice of other opportunities. People try to select techniques that are the least costly to them (Secord, Backman, and Slavitt, 1976).

According to Ekeh (1974) social exchange evolves as a slow process and it is about trusting other people. The exchange takes place only when both people believe the relationship will be beneficial. Each side can bring something to the relationship that the other person wants. If people expect an association to be rewarding, they become attracted to one another. The exchange should only take place without either person placing guilt or blame.

Burgess and Huston (1979) make several assumptions about why couples enter into relationships and they base them on social exchange theory. First, rewards in a relationship satisfies a person's needs or goals. The more rewarding a relationship is, the more couples report being satisfied with their partners. Second, people in relationships try to maximize the rewards and minimize the losses. If this can be accomplished, relationship satisfaction increases. Third, the other person with whom one engages with has something valuable to him or her. When there no longer is value in the relationship the couple may terminate it. Fourth, for the relationship to be satisfying, there must be a mutual exchange of rewarding behaviors.

When people are satisfied with a relationship, they are not overly concerned if the exchange in the relationship is equal. Ekeh (1974) stated the sense of equality in an exchange relationship is needed for the continuity of the social interaction. A break in this equality can lead to an emotional reaction which can result in conflict. How a couple deals with these emotional reactions that result in conflict can greatly affect the future of their relationship. Research has been and is

still being conducted to test the success of these conflict management behaviors and how they affect a couple's relationship satisfaction.

### Conflict Management and Satisfaction Empirical Findings

Research that is relevant to the present study investigates the different ways men and women handle conflict in romantic dating relationships. Do men and women have a tendency to manage conflict differently? Does the method of conflict management change as the relationship goes from dating into marriage? Research suggests women tend to be more conflict engaging and men tend to be more conflict avoiding.

Research also relevant to the present study investigates how these conflict management behaviors affect the male's satisfaction, the female's satisfaction, the likelihood of marriage and the success of the marriage. The usage of more productive conflict management behaviors tend to result in a more productive relationship. The current study looks at how college observers evaluate different conflict management strategies in a hypothetical dating relationship.

This method of data collection differs from the following empirical studies because they are not social perception studies. They asked participants to rate certain conflict management strategies used in their personal relationships. The current study is a social perception study. Participants were asked to rate how effective they thought a conflict management strategy was to a scenario they read about a hypothetical dating couple. Participants were not asked about their own usage of conflict management strategies.

### Empirical Findings on Conflict Management Strategies

Buunk, Schaap, and Prevoe (1990) chose a sample of 51 men and 84 women from a Dutch university. The mean age was 25 years. Each participant filled out a questionnaire which

consisted of 28 behaviors identifying five conflict resolution tactics: avoiding, compromising, soothing, aggressive-pushing, and problem-solving. Participants rated on a 5-point scale how each behavior applied to themselves and to their romantic partner. Matched paired-sample t-tests were used to analyze the data. Men indicated they were more avoiding, compromising, and soothing than women. Women indicated they were more aggressive-pushing and used more problem-solving than men. The results indicated men try to avoid discussing the problem while women want to openly discuss it. Men also preferred to soothe while women were more likely to express negative feelings during conflict. This study supports previous statements on gender differences and conflict management. Beck (1998) also stated that women like to discuss conflict while men tend to avoid conflict because they think it hinders a relationship.

Kurdek (1995) selected 155 couples to fill out a marital satisfaction scale and a conflict resolution style scale. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale consisted of three-items that asked participants to rate on a 9-point scale how satisfied they were in their marriage ( 1 = not at all to 9 = extremely ). The Cronbach alphas for the summed scores were +.98 for husbands and +.97 for wives. Conflict resolution style was measured by the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory. It asked participants to state how often they used these styles when dealing with conflict ( 1 = never to 5 = always ). Results showed that a wife's usage of conflict engagement was related to a decrease in the husband's marital satisfaction. A wife's usage of withdrawal was negatively related to her own marital satisfaction. The results indicated a husband's marital satisfaction may be more affected by how his wife resolved conflict than his wife's marital satisfaction being affected by how her husband resolved conflict.

Tezer (1996) chose 33 women and 38 men who volunteered to participate in a study in

Turkey. The participants had been married between 1-30 years. The participants completed a questionnaire asking them to rank five conflict resolution behaviors: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating from 1 (most typical) to 5 (least typical) that they used towards their spouse. The results revealed significant differences for the five conflict behaviors between the spouses. There were also gender differences in the ranks of the conflict behaviors. A Mann-Whitney U test was used to test the sex differences of the behaviors within each relationship. Only competition was found to be significantly different between women and men. Women seemed more competitive toward their husbands. Men tended to be more collaborative toward their wives.

Feldman and Gowen (1998) selected 869 high school students ( 42% boys and 58% girls) to complete a survey. The students ranged from 14-19 years old. The mean age was 16.0 years. A 29-item scale was used to assess conflict resolution behaviors that were used when dealing with a romantic partner. A five-point scale was used (0 = never to 4 = almost always). The results indicated overt anger and violence were associated (  $r = .61$ ;  $r^2 = .37$  ). Overt anger was also associated with avoidance (  $r = .49$ ;  $r^2 = .24$  ). Compromise was used most frequently when dealing with conflict. Boys were less likely than girls to report using overt anger. Boys were also less likely than girls to use compromise. Boys were more likely than girls to use distraction when dealing with conflict.

Mackey and O'Brien (1998) used semi-structured interviews on 120 spouses to assess their differences in the usage of conflict resolution behaviors. Chi square analyses were computed during three phases of the couple's marriage: the early years, the child-rearing years, and the empty nest years. In all three phases, the wives reported themselves as more confrontational than their

husbands. Husbands also reported their wives as being more confrontational. The amount of confrontation also increased in each phase for both men and women.

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) used 129 heterosexual married couples. They ranged in age from 21-83 years. The mean age was 39 years. The couples had been married between 1-46 years with the mean being 13 years. Each participant filled out the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale, the Lund's Commitment Scale, the Lund's Love Scale, and the Relational Maintenance Strategy Scale which consisted five maintenance techniques: positivity, openness, assurances, network, and tasks. The reliabilities for each of these were +.87, +.86, +.83, +.79, and +.73 respectively. Results indicated a wife's marital satisfaction was related to a wife's usage of tasks ( $r = .28$ ;  $r^2 = .08$ ). A husband's marital satisfaction was related to the wife's usage of positivity ( $r = .27$ ;  $r^2 = .07$ ), openness ( $r = .29$ ;  $r^2 = .08$ ), assurances ( $r = .25$ ;  $r^2 = .06$ ), and tasks ( $r = .21$ ;  $r^2 = .04$ ). A husband's satisfaction was also related to his usage of positivity ( $r = .23$ ;  $r^2 = .05$ ), openness ( $r = .22$ ;  $r^2 = .05$ ), and network ( $r = .20$ ;  $r^2 = .04$ ). The results indicated that wives may be slightly more relationship orientated than husbands. They also indicated that a decrease in the usage of maintenance behaviors can refer to relationship difficulty.

Cramer (2000) used a convenient sample of 199 undergraduates. The Hendrick (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale was used to measure relationship satisfaction. It consisted of seven items rated on a 5-point scale. The higher the score the more satisfaction in the relationship. The mean age for the women was 23.28 years and the mean age for the men was 23.20 years. The results indicated relationship duration was positively correlated with conflict ( $r = .19$ ;  $r^2 = .04$ ), and negative conflict style ( $r = .24$ ;  $r^2 = .06$ ). Relationship satisfaction was negatively correlated with conflict ( $r = -.35$ ;  $r^2 = .12$ ), negative conflict style ( $r = -.53$ ;  $r^2 = .28$ ), and unresolved conflict

(  $r = -.51$ ;  $r^2 = .26$ ). The findings suggest relationship satisfaction is more affected by how couples handle conflict than the frequency of conflict.

Hojjat (2000) used a sample of 60 heterosexual couples. The couples were either married or living together. The Conflict Management Questionnaire was administered to each participant. It contained 17 statements that depicted one of four conflict management strategies:

Positive/Active, Positive/Passive, Negative/Active, and Negative/Passive. A positive/active strategy involves resolving the conflict in an assertive yet equitable manner. A positive/passive strategy involves resolving the conflict in a non-assertive yet equitable manner. A negative/active strategy involves resolving the conflict in an assertive, non-equitable manner. A negative/passive strategy involves resolving the conflict in a non-assertive, non-equitable manner. The questionnaire was rated on a 9-point scale ( 1 = strongly disagree to 9 = strongly agree ). The results indicated women rated themselves higher than the men on the Neg/Act strategy. The men rated themselves higher on the Pos/Pas strategy. The women also rated the men higher on the Pos/Pas strategy than the men rated the women. It seemed the negative strategies related negatively to relationship satisfaction. Women viewed their own strategies as more assertive than the men and the men viewed their own strategies as more passive.

#### Operational Definitions of Conflict Management Strategies for the Present Study

Researchers have employed different operational definitions for conflict management strategies. Previous research has chosen to focus on all positive conflict management strategies or a mixture of positive and negative strategies. The current study takes a different approach. Three of the strategies in this study are negative and one strategy leaves the outcome up to fate. The coin toss strategy leaves the outcome up to fate. No research was found that had really tested this



strategy. Compliance seems to be a little less negative than manipulation which seems to be a little less negative than confrontation. This study uses four different conflict management strategies in eight scenarios. Four of the scenarios have a male portraying the conflict management strategy and the other four scenarios have a female portraying the conflict management strategy. The definitions below will be used to define the meaning of each conflict management strategy throughout the present study.

1. Chance: Allowing one individual within the relationship to flip a coin whenever conflict arises to decide the solution to the problem.
2. Manipulation: One individual within the relationship allows his or her partner to make the decision but is resentful of that person. The individual attempts to get back at his or her partner in subtle ways, such as being late for a date.
3. Compliance: One individual within the relationship allows his or her partner to make the decision and he or she accepts that decision without resentment.
4. Confrontation: One individual within the relationship attempts to make the decisions, and his or her partner begins an argument. Now, the couple is constantly in disagreement over who should make the decisions.

#### Statement of Conflict Management Problem

Dating relationships were chosen because college students were used as participants. Most college students are not married, but they do engage in dating relationships. In a dating relationship, one area where conflict management can be used is when couples disagree on how to manage everyday conflicts. Couples may have differing views on the best way to manage conflict and they may not agree with the way their partners want to deal with conflict. Selection of conflict

management strategies can be important in how couples decide to manage conflict. If conflict management is not successful, a couple's relationship could be damaged and may eventually end.

Various methods have been used in the past to gather data on conflict management. One method of data collection has been videotaped interviews. Researchers have allowed couples to discuss an area of conflict while being videotaped. Then the researchers have watched the tapes and noted the conflict management strategies employed. A second method for data collection has been face to face interviewing. A researcher asks an individual questions concerning his or her method of conflict management and the amount of satisfaction within the relationship. Perhaps the most popular method of data collection is having people fill-out surveys. Some surveys are sent through the mail and participants are expected to send the completed survey back to the researcher. At other times participants fill-out the survey and hand it back to the researcher. The current study is a social perception study where participants read a scenario about a hypothetical couple and completed the survey in class. Surveys were handed back to the researcher. Such scenario studies do have an advantage over traditional questionnaire studies in that the researcher can manipulate some independent variables to determine their effects on the dependent variables.

Most previous investigations focused on how conflict management strategies affect marital satisfaction. The research focused on which behaviors women used more often and which ones men used more often. As mentioned previously, research has shown women tend to be more assertive and confrontational while their spouses tend to be more compliant and avoiding (Mackey & O'Brien, 1998). Women like to confront their spouses to deal with conflict (Hojjat, 2000). Men on the other hand, experience anxiety and dissatisfaction when confronting their spouses (Mackey & O'Brien). When a gender difference was reported for marital satisfaction, men seemed

to report more satisfaction than women (Schumm, Webb, and Bollman,1998). Previous research has also indicated that women seem more relationship oriented than men. This could be one reason why women want to discuss their feelings during conflict and men tend to withdraw. It makes men uncomfortable to talk about their feelings. It seems to make women uncomfortable when men do not talk about their feelings.

The current study wanted to identify the effectiveness of conflict management strategies among dating couples. Do conflict management strategy trends hold true from the dating years to the marital years? Are women still more confrontational while dating? Do men in dating relationships comply or avoid as much as they do when they are married? It is proposed that men and women college students will view a dating relationship to be different from a marriage relationship in terms of the appropriate conflict management strategies to employ.

The purpose of the present study was to determine the effect negative conflict management strategies have on a dating relationship. More specifically, the researcher wants to look at female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage in relation to the effectiveness of different conflict management strategies. As mentioned previously, relationship satisfaction decreases with the usage of negative conflict management such as, confrontation and manipulation (Kurdeck, 1995). Tezer (1996) stated that confrontation is one of the most negative conflict management strategies used by individuals. With previous research as a guide, it is anticipated that compliance will be rated higher than manipulation and confrontation. The fourth conflict management strategy presented in the current study is chance (coin toss). Not a great deal of research has been conducted using chance as a conflict management strategy. Research has focused on how conflict management strategies such as, cooperation, compliance, negotiation,

manipulation, and confrontation affect a couple's relationship. Studies tend to compare positive and negative conflict management strategies.

The current study took a different approach to study conflict management. This study wants to see how effective the less desirable conflict management strategies are in relation to female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage. A chance type of conflict management is neither positive or negative. This strategy leaves the decision up to fate. One question this study hoped to answer was: Is leaving the decision up to fate a more favorable conflict management strategy than compliance, manipulation, or confrontation? Another question this study hoped to answer was: Are there gender differences among the amount of usage of these conflict management strategies? Hopefully, this study will help answer these questions and give readers some insight into how a successful relationship works in terms of conflict management.

#### Hypotheses: Main Effects

##### Participant Gender

Male participants will produce higher ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage and success of marriage than will female participants. This hypothesis is supported by Schumm et al., (1998); Metz and Rosser (1994), who found that husbands are more satisfied than wives.

##### Target Gender

Scenarios with a male target will produce higher ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage and success of marriage than will scenarios with a female target. Schumm et al., (1998); Metz and Rosser, (1994), found that husbands report a higher degree of

satisfaction than wives.

### Conflict Management Scenarios

The chance (coin toss) conflict management strategy will produce higher ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage followed by compliance, with manipulation and confrontation having the lowest ratings. Research by Kurdeck, (1995); Borisoff and Victor, (1989), would seem to support this hypothesis, but research is not totally clear on which would be the most effective.

### Hypotheses: Interaction Effects

The two-way and three-way interactions follow the three main effect predictions. The interaction effects are stated as follows:

#### Participant Gender by Target Gender

Male participants reading scenarios with male targets will produce higher ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage and female participants reading scenarios with female targets producing the lowest ratings.

#### Participant Gender by Conflict Management Strategy

Male participants reading the chance (coin toss) conflict management strategy scenario will produce the highest ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage followed by male participants reading the compliance scenario, then the male participants reading the manipulation scenario, and finally male participants reading the confrontation scenario.

#### Target Gender by Conflict Management Strategy

The chance (coin toss) scenario using a male target will produce the highest ratings for

male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage followed by the compliance scenario with a male target, then manipulation with a male target, and finally the confrontation scenario with a male target.

Participant Gender by Target Gender by Conflict Management Strategy

Male participants reading the chance (coin toss) scenario with a male target will produce the highest ratings for male satisfaction, female satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage followed by male participants reading the compliance scenario with a male target, then male participants reading the manipulation scenario with a male target, and finally a male participants reading the confrontation scenario with a male target.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### Participants

There were a total of 23 men and women undergraduate students (18 or older) from a psychology course who participated in an initial reliability test for the questionnaire used in the study. Surveys were disqualified if participants failed to complete the survey correctly or if they were not present for both reliability testing days. Less than five surveys were thrown out at any stage during the study. There were a total of 27 men and women undergraduate students (18 or older) from a psychology course who participated in the validity testing of the conflict management scenarios used in the study. Participants' surveys were once again excluded for failure to complete the questionnaire correctly. There were a total of 352 (126 men and 226 women) undergraduate students (18 or older) enrolled in different psychology courses from a mid-size Southeastern Tennessee university who participated in completing the survey packet. Participant's surveys were thrown out if they failed to complete the survey packet correctly.

The majority of participants were single (88.7%) but currently involved in a dating relationship (51.3%). Also the participants were of underclass status: freshman (56.1%), sophomores (22.7%), juniors (11.9%), and seniors (9.1%). The age of participants ranged from 18 to 62 with a mean age of 20.84 years and a standard deviation of 4.99. Some students were offered extra-credit by the instructor to encourage them to participate. Students who chose not to participate were offered alternate means to receive the extra-credit (i.e. library assignment). Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of eight conflict scenarios. This yielded 16 experimental groups with unequal cell sizes. Cell sizes were: coin toss with both male target and

participant (N = 16); coin toss with male target and female participant (N = 30); manipulation with both male target and participant (N = 15); manipulation with male target and female participant (N = 26); compliance with both male target and participant (N = 12); compliance with male target and female participant (N = 36); confrontation with both male target and participant (N = 15); confrontation with male target and female participant (N = 26); coin toss with female target and male participant (N = 19); coin toss with both female target and participant (N = 26); manipulation with female target and male participant (N = 17); manipulation with both female target and participant (N = 28); compliance with female target and male participant (N = 13); compliance with both female target and participant (N = 30); confrontation with female target and male participant (N = 19); and confrontation with both female target and participant (N = 24)

### Measures

The survey packet included a page of instructions for the participants (see Appendix A), one of eight conflict management scenarios (see Appendix B), a post scenario relationship questionnaire (see Appendix C), a demographics page (see Appendix D), and a scenario content test verification (also see Appendix D).

### Instructions

Participants were encouraged to fully answer all questions on the questionnaire. They were reminded not to place any identifying marks on the survey packet, and that their answers would remain confidential. They were then informed they could contact the principal investigator with any questions regarding the survey or if they wished to obtain the results of the study.



## Conflict Management Scenarios

All eight conflict scenarios described a college-age dating relationship in which the method for managing conflict changed over time. The strategy one person used to try to manage disagreements differed within each scenario. In four of the scenarios a male target was the individual taking action to manage conflict and in the other four scenarios a female target was the individual taking action to manage conflict. Otherwise, the scenarios contained identical information about the relationship, for instance; where the couple met and how they managed conflict at the beginning of their relationship. In four of the scenarios, Melissa is described as an only child. In the other four scenarios, Tom is described as an only child. To combine the scenarios here, Tom and his actions are in parenthesis to let readers know there are two different versions of the same paragraph concerning who grew up as the only child and who is starting to exert more power within the relationship.

Generic Scenario Information. Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship became more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems. Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion. However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement.

    Melissa (Tom), who grew up as an only child is used to getting her (his) way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship she (he) has begun to exercise

more and more control over the decision making and she (he) now wants to make all of the decisions.

Differences Among the Scenarios Information. Below are the four different conflict management strategies used in the study. There are eight scenarios. Four scenarios describe Tom's reaction to Melissa's exercise of power. The other four scenarios describe Melissa's reaction to Tom's exercise of power. To combine the scenarios here, parenthesis are used to show the eight scenarios using the four different conflict management strategies.

1. Coin Toss: So, whenever there is strong disagreement the couple has decided the best solution would be to let Melissa (Tom) flip a coin, thereby leaving the final decision to chance. They believe this is the best way to resolve the conflict and still be satisfied with their relationship. They have decided not to become mad if the coin toss does not go in their favor.
2. Manipulation: This exercise of power makes Tom (Melissa) resentful of the change, but he (she) continues to go along with it. He (she) attempts to get back at Melissa (Tom) on occasion through unexpected stubbornness or by being late for dates.
3. Compliance: Now, whenever a problem arises, Tom (Melissa) gives in to Melissa (Tom) and lets her (him) make the final decision. He (she) finds by doing this, it reduces the tension and helps the couple avoid conflict. He (she) has decided that maintaining the relationship is more important than having input into the decision making. So, every time a decision needs to be made, Tom (Melissa) lets Melissa (Tom) make it.
4. Confrontation: Tom (Melissa) is getting tired of Melissa's (Tom's) actions. So now,

whenever a problem arises and Melissa (Tom) tries to make the decision, Tom (Melissa) will begin to argue with her (him). He (she) thinks he (she) should have a more significant role in the decision making. Consequently, the couple is constantly arguing over even insignificant matters and who should make decisions about the relationship.

After reading a scenario, the participants were asked to provide ratings regarding the relationship described. Participants were asked to indicate: A) How satisfied they thought the female was in the relationship; B) How satisfied they thought the male was in the relationship; C) The likelihood of marriage; and D) The success of the marriage. Participants were asked to indicate their answers on a Likert type scale from 1 to 7. One on the scale represents rating statements as “Not Very Likely” and seven represents statements as “Very Likely”. Participants were asked to circle the number that best represented their answers.

#### Demographics and Scenario Content Test Verification

After completing the relationship questionnaire, participants were asked to answer a few questions about themselves. Participants were asked things, such as their age, gender, class rank, and if they were currently in a dating relationship. A few questions regarding the scenario read were placed at the end of the demographic page. These questions were used to ensure that the participants read and understood the scenario they had answered questions about. This section included questions, such as where the couple met and who grew up as the only child. Most participants answered these questions correctly. It seemed that the majority of participants had read and understood these questions. Very few participants failed to answer these questions or answered them incorrectly. (Appendix D)

## Procedure

### Reliability of Relationship Questionnaire

The idea for the relationship questionnaire came from reading previous research. Hendrick (1998) developed The Relationship Assessment Scale on which the present questionnaire is very loosely based. The relationship questionnaire was developed by the author, so its reliability was unknown. A test-retest reliability study was conducted on the four dependent variables : female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage using one of the conflict management scenarios during a two-week interval. Participants were students from an upper level psychology course. Each participant was given a scenario to read and then he or she was asked to answer the relationship questionnaire. Pearson product moment correlation coefficients were used to determine the reliability of the four dependent variables (see Table 1). These Pearson r coefficients show that their was moderate reliability for the four rating scales used.

Table 1

Reliability Coefficients for the Four Dependent Variables (Two-Week Interval)

Measure	r
Female satisfaction	+0.55
Male Satisfaction	+0.42
Likelihood leads to marriage	+0.53
Success of marriage	+0.67

### Validity of the Effectiveness of the Conflict Scenarios

Upon reviewing Hojjat's study, the author conceived the idea for the present eight conflict scenarios. The scenarios are loosely based on the ideas from the Hojjat (2000) study, but they were largely constructed by the author. It was important that the conflict scenarios differ in their effectiveness to successfully manage conflict. To test the validity of the conflict strategies, a small group of students was used. Students were asked to read four scenarios regarding the four conflict management strategies. They were asked to read all scenarios before ranking their effectiveness. After reading the scenarios, students were asked to rank them in order of how effective each strategy was in managing conflict. A rating of one represented the most effective method of conflict management and a rating of four represented the least effective method of conflict management. Percent of agreement was calculated to determine which scenario was the most effective. A small group of 27 psychology students was used to test scenario validity. Agreement was low and it varied between the participants in the focus group(see Table 2). For the coin toss scenario, only 55% of the participants agreed this was the most effective way to manage conflict with the confrontation scenario at 30% as the least effective way to manage conflict.

Table 2

#### Validity Testing for the Four Scenarios

<u>Scenario/Rank</u>	<u>% of Agreement</u>
Coin Toss: 1	55%
Compliance: 2	44%
Manipulation: 3	37%

Table 2 cont.

Confrontation: 4

30%

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1 = most effective way to manage conflict

4 = least effective way to manage conflict

### Experimental Procedure

Participants 18 and older were invited to participate in the study. Students were told their participation in the study was completely voluntary and that they could be excused at any time during the study with no penalty. They were then told if they chose to participate, they needed to obtain a survey packet. Each student was then handed a packet. To keep the participant's anonymity, he or she was instructed not to leave any identifying marks on the packet, such as, name, social security number, or telephone number.

There was very little risk that any participants would be physically or mentally harmed during the study; therefore, the researcher applied for and received an IRB exemption. Participants were informed a way in which they could obtain the results of the study. They were also informed they could call with any questions regarding the study. The investigator's telephone number was given (psychology office: 439-4424) aloud at the beginning of the study.

Participants were briefly told the purpose of the study: What the study was about, who was conducting the study, and why. They were informed they could ask questions at any time during the completion of the survey packet. They were encouraged to ask questions if something was unclear to them.

The participants were asked to read their scenario carefully and complete the relationship

questionnaire. Then they were instructed to complete the demographics sheet. They were told it was important to fully answer each question. They were assured that their answers to the surveys would remain completely anonymous.

### Experimental Design and Data Analysis

The design of the present study was a 2 (Participant Gender) X 2 (Target Gender) X 4 (Conflict Management Strategy) between subjects factorial with unequal ns. A Roy's Largest Root MANOVA and a Roy Bargman step-down procedure was conducted on all the dependent variables: female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage. The Roy Bargman step-down procedure was employed because it is a more conservative statistical test. The alpha level was set at  $< .05$  per hypothesis. A Tukey HSD post hoc test was conducted for significance found among the four levels of the conflict strategies and the significant two-way interaction. Finally, a correlation matrix was generated on all variables. This correlation matrix was then used to help understand the factorial data and possibly generate hypotheses for future research.

### Violation of Assumptions

Participants chosen for psychological studies are supposed to be randomly selected. This assumption was violated in the present study. A convenient sample was chosen. Participants were taken from Introduction to Psychology courses because the classes are large and one can obtain many participants in a short period of time. Students in the class chose whether they would participate in the study. The researcher had no control over who would attend class or who would choose to participate in the study. The second part of the assumption states the participants were randomly assigned to each level of the independent variable. This part of the assumption was not

violated. The scenarios were randomly handed out to each participant.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

A 2 (Participant Gender) X 2 (Target Gender) X 4 (Conflict Management Strategy) MANOVA complete randomized factorial with unequal ns was performed on the four dependent variables: female satisfaction, male satisfaction, likelihood of marriage, and success of marriage. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations for the 16 experimental groups. Table 4 presents the Roy's Largest Root MANOVA F values. Table 5 presents the univariate F and the step-down F values for the main effects and interaction effects on the four dependent variables. Table 6 presents the values of the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient matrix.

#### Participant Gender Effect

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 333) = 1.53, p > .05$  was non-significant. The univariate F values were also all non-significant (see Table 5). The F values indicated that there were no differences in participants on female satisfaction (.79), male satisfaction (1.14), likelihood of marriage (1.64), and success of marriage (.52);  $p > .05$ . One of the four dependent variables had a significant step-down F value. A  $F(1,334) = 4.04, p < .05$  was significant on likelihood of marriage. All other step-down F values were non-significant. Step-down F values indicated there were no differences in participants on female satisfaction (.79), male satisfaction (1.03), and success of marriage (.24);  $p > .05$  (see Table 5).

#### Target Gender Effect

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 333) = 92.19, p < .01$  was significant. Two of the four dependent variables had significant univariate F values. A  $F(1,336) = 127.68, p < .001$  was significant on female satisfaction with the female target receiving a  $M = 4.51$  and the male target

having a  $M = 2.78$ .

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the 16 Experimental Groups

<u>Measure</u>		<u>Male Target</u>				<u>Female Target</u>			
		1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Female Satisfaction	MM	3.25	2.73	2.17	2.67	3.02	2.69	2.69	2.58
	SD	1.73	1.10	1.11	1.35	1.24	1.29	1.31	1.27
	FM	3.95	4.24	5.92	3.53	4.23	4.14	5.93	4.08
	SD	1.51	1.71	1.12	1.54	1.31	1.53	1.31	1.53
Male Satisfaction	MM	4.69	4.53	5.75	3.73	4.63	5.31	5.92	4.35
	SD	1.30	1.68	1.66	1.53	1.43	0.97	1.02	1.20
	FM	3.32	2.29	2.92	2.74	3.38	2.50	2.70	2.38
	SD	1.34	0.99	1.19	1.33	1.24	0.92	1.34	1.06
Likelihood of Marriage	MM	2.12	2.60	3.67	2.40	2.20	2.46	2.97	2.31
	SD	1.41	1.30	1.15	1.06	1.32	1.17	1.50	1.05
	FM	3.05	2.47	3.00	2.32	2.58	2.11	3.10	2.33
	SD	1.65	1.74	1.53	1.00	1.24	0.83	1.83	1.52
Success of Marriage	MM	2.50	2.73	2.33	3.07	2.37	2.58	2.25	2.27

Table 3 cont.

SD	1.26	1.67	1.37	1.49	1.43	1.17	1.08	0.87
FM	3.11	2.18	2.54	2.42	3.19	2.43	2.47	2.46
SD	1.63	0.88	1.33	1.57	1.52	1.14	1.57	1.32

1 = coin toss 2 = manipulation 3 = compliance 4 = confrontation

MM = male mean FM = female mean

A  $F(1,336) = 223.13, p < .001$  was significant on male satisfaction with the female target having a  $M = 2.77$  and the male target receiving a  $M = 4.95$ . In this analysis, participants thought scenarios with the female target would produce higher female satisfaction than male satisfaction and for scenarios the male target would rate male satisfaction higher than female satisfaction. Two of the four dependent variables produced significant step-down F values. A  $F(1,336) = 127.68, p < .001$  was significant on female satisfaction. A  $F(1,335) = 175.61, p < .001$  was significant on male satisfaction.

Table 4

Roy's Largest Root MANOVA F Values

Effect	Roy's Largest Root F Value
Participant Gender	1.53
Target Gender	92.19***
Conflict Management Strategy	16.86***
Participant Gender X Target Gender	1.40

Table 4 cont.

Participant Gender X Conflict Management Strategy	0.10
Target Gender X Conflict Management Strategy	18.90***
Participant Gender X Target Gender X Conflict Management Strategy	1.82

\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

\*\*\*p<.001

Conflict Management Strategies Effect

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 335) = 16.86, p < .001$  was significant. Three univariate F values were also significant; female satisfaction  $F(3,336) = 6.67$ ; male satisfaction  $F(3,336) = 9.74$ ; likelihood of marriage  $F(3,336) = 6.10, p < .001$ . The univariate  $F(3,336) = 1.31, p > .05$  for success of marriage was non-significant. For the significant F values on the conflict management strategies, a Tukey HSD post hoc procedure was employed to identify significant pairwise mean comparisons. On the significant  $F(3,336) = 6.67$  on female satisfaction, the post hoc procedure revealed that compliance  $M = 4.45$  differed from coin toss  $M = 3.66$ , manipulation  $M = 3.45$  and confrontation  $M = 3.24$ . On male satisfaction, the post hoc procedure revealed that compliance  $M = 4.41$  differed from coin toss  $M = 4.01$ , manipulation  $M = 3.66$ , and confrontation  $M = 3.31$ . On the likelihood of marriage, the post hoc procedure revealed that compliance  $M = 3.11$  differed from coin toss  $M = 2.47$ , manipulation  $M = 2.37$ , and confrontation  $M = 2.33$ . On success of marriage the post hoc procedure revealed that none of the groups differed from one another: coin toss  $M = 2.78$ , manipulation  $M = 2.48$ , compliance  $M = 2.37$ , and confrontation  $M = 2.50$ . Three of the four dependent variables have significant step-down F values. A  $F(3,336) =$

6.67,  $p < .001$  was significant of female satisfaction. A  $F(3,335) = 8.43$ ,  $p < .001$  was significant on male satisfaction. Also a  $F(3,333) = 8.13$ ,  $p < .001$  was significance on success of marriage.

### Two-way Interactions

#### Participant Gender by Target Gender

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 333) = 1.40$ ,  $p > .05$  for the interaction between participant gender and target gender was non-significant. The univariate F values were also all non-significant (see Table 5). The F values indicate there was no interaction between participant gender and target gender on female satisfaction (.11); male satisfaction (2.63); likelihood of marriage (.01); and success of marriage (1.51),  $p > .05$ . The step-down F values were also non-significant (see Table 5). The step-down F values indicate there was no interaction between participant gender and target gender on female satisfaction (.11), male satisfaction (2.69), likelihood of marriage (.18), and success of marriage (2.62);  $p > .05$ .

#### Participant Gender by Conflict Management Strategy

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 335) = .10$ ,  $p > .05$  for the interaction between participant gender and conflict management strategy was non-significant. The univariate F values were also all non-significant. The F values indicated there was no interaction between participant gender and conflict management strategy on female satisfaction (.23); male satisfaction (.72); likelihood of marriage (.13); and success of marriage (.40),  $p > .05$ . The step-down F values were also non-significant. The F values indicate there was no interaction between participant gender and conflict management strategy on female satisfaction (.23), male satisfaction (.76), likelihood of marriage (.15), and success of marriage (.90),  $p > .05$ .

### Target Gender by Conflict Management Strategy

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F(1, 335) = 18.90, p < .001$  for the interaction between target gender and conflict management strategy was significant. Three of the four dependent variables had highly significant univariate  $F$  values. A  $F(3,336) = 13.89$  was significant,  $p < .001$  on female satisfaction. A  $F(3,336) = 8.57$  was also significant at  $p < .001$  on male satisfaction. A  $F(3,336) = 2.73$  was significant at  $p < .05$  level on success of marriage. Three of the four dependent variables had significant step-down  $F$  values. A  $F(3,336) = 13.89$  was significant,  $p < .001$  on female satisfaction. A  $F(3,335) = 8.84$  was significant,  $p < .001$ , on male satisfaction. Also, a  $F(3,334) = 3.32$  was significant,  $p < .05$  on likelihood of marriage.

Post hoc testing was conducted on the interaction between the three significant dependent variables. On female satisfaction, a target gender X conflict management strategy interaction was significant  $F = 14.73, p < .001$ . This significant interaction was due to participants rating the male target less satisfied than the female target on all conflict strategies.

Simple effect analysis revealed that when participants rated the male target on female satisfaction, it was discovered that coin toss ( $M = 3.22$ ) differed from compliance ( $M = 2.56$ ) and confrontation ( $M = 2.61$ ). Also, on female satisfaction when rating the female target, participants tended to perceive the greatest female satisfaction when the conflict management strategy employed was compliance ( $M = 5.93$ ) but considerably less satisfied when using coin toss ( $M = 4.11$ ), manipulation ( $M = 4.18$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 3.84$ ).

On male satisfaction, a target gender X conflict management strategy interaction was significant  $F = 10.46, p < .001$ . This significant interaction was due to participants rating the

female target as less satisfied than the male target on all four conflict management strategies.

Simple effect analysis revealed that when participants rated the female target on male satisfaction, coin toss ( $M = 3.36$ ) differed from manipulation ( $M = 2.42$ ), compliance ( $M = 2.77$ ), and confrontation ( $M = 2.54$ ). Also, on male satisfaction, participants tended to perceive the greatest male satisfaction when the conflict management strategy employed was compliance ( $M = 5.88$ ) but less satisfied when using the coin toss ( $M = 4.65$ ), manipulation ( $M = 5.02$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 4.12$ ).

On success of marriage, a target gender X conflict management strategy interaction was significant  $F = 2.65$ ,  $p < .05$ . This significant interaction was due to participants rating success of marriage higher on two of the strategies (manipulation and confrontation) for the male target and the other two strategies (coin toss and compliance) were higher for the female target.

Table 5

Univariate and Step-down F Values for the Main Effects and Interaction Effects on the Four Dependent Variables

IV	DV	Univariate		Step-down		Alpha Level
		F Score	df	F Score	df	
CMS	Female Satisfaction	6.67	3/336	6.67	3/336	.001
	Male Satisfaction	9.74	3/336	8.43	3/335	.001
	Likelihood of Marriage	6.10	3/336	1.77	3/334	.001
	Success of Marriage	1.31	3/336	8.13	3/333	.001
Target Gender	Female Satisfaction	127.68	1/336	127.68	1/336	.001

Table 5 cont.

	Male Satisfaction	223.13	1/336	175.61	1/335	.001
	Likelihood of Marriage	0.03	1/336	0.01	1/334	.05
	Success of Marriage	0.33	1/336	0.62	1/333	.05
Participant Gender	Female Satisfaction	0.79	1/336	0.79	1/336	.05
	Male Satisfaction	1.14	1/336	1.03	1/335	.05
	Likelihood of Marriage	1.64	1/336	4.04	1/334	.05
	Success of Marriage	0.52	1/336	0.24	1/333	.05
Target Gender by CMS interaction	Female Satisfaction	13.89	3/336	13.89	3/336	.001
	Male Satisfaction	8.57	3/336	8.84	3/335	.001
	Likelihood of Marriage	2.05	3/336	3.32	3/334	.05
	Success of Marriage	2.73	3/336	1.62	3/333	.05
Participant Gender by CMS interaction	Female Satisfaction	0.23	3/336	0.23	3/336	.05
	Male Satisfaction	0.72	3/336	0.76	3/335	.05
	Likelihood of Marriage	0.13	3/336	0.15	3/334	.05
	Success of Marriage	0.40	3/336	0.90	3/333	.05
Target Gender by Participant interaction	Female Satisfaction	0.11	1/336	0.11	1/336	.05
	Male Satisfaction	2.63	1/336	2.69	1/335	.05
	Likelihood of Marriage	0.10	1/336	0.18	1/334	.05
	Success of	1.51	1/336	2.62	1/333	.05



Table 5 cont.

		Marriage				
Target Gender by Participant Gender by CMS interaction	Female	0.63	3/336	0.63	3/336	.05
	Satisfaction					
	Male	0.70	3/336	0.71	3/335	.05
	Satisfaction					
	Likelihood	0.86	3/336	1.66	3/334	.05
	of Marriage					
	Success of	0.34	3/336	0.76	3/333	.05
	Marriage					

Simple effect analysis revealed that when participants rated the female target on success of marriage, coin toss ( $M = 3.16$ ) differed from manipulation ( $M = 2.33$ ), compliance ( $M = 2.49$ ) and confrontation ( $M = 2.44$ ). Also, on success of marriage, participants saw no differences among the conflict management strategies: coin toss ( $M = 2.27$ ), manipulation ( $M = 2.63$ ), compliance ( $M = 2.27$ ), and confrontation ( $M = 2.36$ ).

#### Three-way Interactions

The Roy's Largest Root MANOVA  $F = 1.82$  was non-significant,  $p > .05$  for the interaction among participant gender, target gender, and conflict management strategy. The univariate  $F$  values were also all non-significant (see Table 5). The  $F$  values indicated there was no interaction among participant gender, target gender, and conflict management strategy on female satisfaction (.63), male satisfaction (.70), likelihood of marriage (.86), and success of marriage (.34),  $p > .05$ . Also, the step-down  $F$  values were all non-significant. The  $F$  values indicated there was no interaction among participant gender, target gender, and conflict management strategy on female satisfaction (.63), male satisfaction (.71), likelihood of marriage (1.66), and success of marriage (.76),  $p > .05$ .

### Correlations

All responses from participants including the four dependent variables ratings were analyzed within a Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient matrix. The purpose of the matrix was to provide better understanding of the factorial data and perhaps identify possible areas of future research. Some interesting relationships were discovered from the analysis. Table 6 shows the appropriate statistics from the correlation matrix.

Female satisfaction ratings were both positively and negatively correlated when compared to the other variables. The negative correlation was with the male satisfaction ( $r = -.30$ ;  $r^2 = .09$ ). Positive correlations with female satisfaction included: likelihood of marriage ( $r = +.29$ ;  $r^2 = .09$ ), and success of marriage ( $r = +.25$ ;  $r^2 = .06$ ).

The male satisfaction rating was positively correlated with: likelihood of marriage ( $r = +.22$ ;  $r^2 = .05$ ), and the success of marriage ( $r = +.15$ ;  $r^2 = .02$ ). The likelihood of marriage rating was positively correlated with the success of marriage ( $r = +.49$ ;  $r^2 = .24$ ). The age of the participant rating was positively correlated with how long the participant had been in a dating relationship ( $r = +.13$ ;  $r^2 = .02$ ).

Table 6

#### Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients Matrix

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Female Satisfaction	Male Satisfaction	Lead to Marriage	Success of Marriage	Age	How long Dating	Argue per Month
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Female

Table 6 cont.

Satisfaction	-.297**	.293**	.246**	-.047	-.052	-.084
Male		.222**	.148**	.034	.019	-.085
Satisfaction						
Lead to		.498**	-.064	-.094	-.026	
Marriage						
Success of				-.046	-.089	-.048
Marriage						
Age					.131*	-.015
How Long						.042
Dating (days)						
Argue per						
Month						

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\*p<.05

\*\*p<.01

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary of Findings

Conflict is an inevitable part of any social relationship; so, it is important to identify ways to manage it successfully. It is also important to identify conflict management strategies that may be helpful or harmful to a relationship. As long as people engage in social relationships, they will need to develop techniques to manage conflict. Many studies have been conducted dealing with conflict management. Much of the research has been conducted using married couples. More studies are being conducted on how friends, dating couples, and same-sex relationships manage or resolve conflict. As more research is being conducted, more information and understanding will be compiled and put into use concerning conflict management. More research of an experimental nature is needed in this area.

#### Hypotheses: Findings and Interpretation

The conflict management strategies studied were negative ways to manage conflict. So, these findings are relative only when dealing with these negative strategies to rate effectiveness. The most robust statistical effects were obtained on two of the four dependent variables: female satisfaction and male satisfaction. For female satisfaction, participants tended to feel the female target ( $M = 4.51$ ) was more satisfied than the male target ( $M = 2.78$ ). Also, it was determined that female satisfaction was the greatest when the conflict management strategy employed was compliance ( $M = 4.45$ ) rather than coin toss ( $M = 3.66$ ), manipulation ( $M = 3.45$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 3.24$ ).

When participants were asked to rate male satisfaction, they thought the male target ( $M =$

4.95) was more satisfied than the female target ( $M = 2.77$ ). Also, the present researcher found that male satisfaction was the highest when the conflict management strategy employed was compliance ( $M = 4.41$ ) rather than coin toss ( $M = 4.01$ ), manipulation ( $M = 3.66$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 3.31$ ).

Participants tended to think that overall, the male targets ( $M = 4.95$ ) were slightly more satisfied with the relationship than the female targets ( $M = 4.51$ ). This finding is consistent with previous research that indicates women tend to report less satisfaction than their male partners in regards to relationship satisfaction (Schumm et al., 1998). Both male and female targets seemed to be the most satisfied when the conflict management strategy employed was compliance. This finding seemed to be inconsistent with previous research on a female's usage of conflict management strategies. Hojjat (2000) indicated women were more likely to use a manipulative or confrontational style. As stated earlier, when a person is being compliant it makes his or her partner feel better about the situation (Schilling, 2003). According to Borisoff and Victor (1989), compliance can be a rewarding behavior if it increases the quality of a relationship. Satisfaction seems to decrease with the usage of negative conflict management styles (Kurdeck, 1995). Perhaps this is one reason why participants seemed to think that compliance was the most satisfying conflict management strategy out of the list available to them. Based on these findings concerning both male and female satisfaction, it would seem that college participants felt the person taking some kind of action when managing conflict would be more satisfied with the relationship than the person being more passive.

Another statistical effect found in this research was on the likelihood of marriage dependent variable. Participants thought the couple in the scenario was more likely to get married

when the compliance ( $M = 3.11$ ) conflict management strategy was employed rather than when the coin toss ( $M = 2.47$ ), manipulation ( $M = 2.37$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 2.33$ ) strategies were employed. Borisoff and Victor (1989) stated that compliance is rewarding if the couple is concerned about the quality of a relationship. If the relationship is important to them they will work to keep it satisfying and the level of commitment will increase as time goes by.

All participant responses were analyzed within a Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient matrix. From this analysis, the researcher discovered some interesting relationships. The female satisfaction dependent variable had both positive and negative correlations. One negative correlation was with male satisfaction. As the female target's satisfaction increased, the male target's satisfaction decreased. One reason for this could have resulted because from when the female target was engaging in making relationship decisions, the male target tended to let her have her way. When men believe that as they are giving up all of their power all of the time, they may become less satisfied with their relationship. A few positive correlations also emerged. As female satisfaction increased so did the likelihood of marriage and the success of marriage. Also, as female satisfaction decreased, the likelihood of marriage and the success of marriage also decreased. When a woman is satisfied with her relationship, she tends to want it to progress to the next level of commitment. Marriage tends to be the highest level of commitment she can make. If satisfaction continues to be high during the marriage, then the success of the marriage is greater because she is happy.

Male satisfaction also had some interesting correlations. The greater the male satisfaction reported, the more likely the relationship would lead to marriage and the greater the success of the marriage. If a man is satisfied with his partner, he will want to sustain the relationship as long as

possible. One way to do this is to ask his partner to marry him. If the marriage is satisfying, the man will work to keep it that way, so the marriage will be more successful. The less male satisfaction reported, the less likely it will lead to marriage and the less marital success.

Finally, there was a positive correlation between likelihood of marriage and success of marriage. If the likelihood increased, so did the success of marriage. If the likelihood of marriage decreased, so did the success of marriage. When a couple is satisfied they tend to stay with their partners. After a while, the couple may decide to increase the level of commitment and get married. After marriage, if the couple is still greatly satisfied with one another, then their marriage will be a success. A possible explanation for this could be that young people have an idealistic view of marriage. These findings seemed to be consistent with the psychological theories discussed earlier.

Surprisingly, out of 12 two-way interaction F values only three were significant. All three significant F values were on the interaction between target gender by conflict management strategy. Also, no three-way interactions came out statistically significant. A future researcher may want to look at other dependent variables. For the present study, the satisfaction dependent variables solicited the greatest interaction effects.

#### Relationship of Results to Psychological Theories

Two theories seem to be important for discussion when trying to explain conflict management. Equity theory and social exchange theory were developed to help explain relationships between business associates. Eventually they were modified so that they could be referred to when discussing romantic relationships. Findings obtained from the present study give support to these theories in regards to conflict management.

### Equity Theory

Adams (1963) stated when people experienced tension, they were less motivated to work and less satisfied with their job. People are motivated to reduce this tension (Borisoff and Victor, 1989). Walster et al. (1978) modified equity theory to include personal relationships. They stated when people are in inequitable, romantic, relationships, they experience stress and try to reduce it. Burgess and Huston (1979) stated people are satisfied with their relationships as long as they view it as equitable.

Previous research has indicated the usage of a negative conflict management strategy is less satisfying to couples (Kurdeck, 1995). When people are dissatisfied they do not view their relationship in an equitable manner (Brehm et al., 1999). This study's findings support the implication that usage of a negative conflict management strategy is less satisfying to the couple. It was discovered both male and female targets were the least satisfied with their relationship when confrontation was used to manage conflict (male  $M = 3.31$  and female  $M = 3.45$ ).

This study also revealed that compliance resulted in the highest ratings of both male satisfaction and female satisfaction (male  $M = 4.41$  and female  $M = 4.45$ ). For some individuals, compliance is rewarding (Borisoff & Victor, 1989). When people are satisfied in their relationship, they perceive it as equitable (Burgess & Huston)

### Social Exchange Theory

This theory stated that social behavior is an exchange of rewards (Homans, 1961). As long as the exchange is rewarding, the relationship will develop (Secord, Backman, & Slavitt, 1976). Homans (1961) stated people will end a relationship unless both of them are making a profit. When an individual is dissatisfied, he or she is not profiting from the relationship. When



conflict occurs, people question the exchange (Burgess & Huston, 1979).

This study's findings support the implication about how a rewarding relationship increases relationship development. As mentioned previously, findings indicated both male and female targets were more satisfied when using compliance. Also, a relationship is more likely to lead to marriage when the male and female targets used compliance ( $M = 3.11$ ) rather than coin toss ( $M = 2.47$ ), manipulation ( $M = 2.37$ ), or confrontation ( $M = 2.33$ ). Compliance seems to make the relationship more satisfying than using one of the more negative conflict management strategies, therefore increasing the chance of relationship development. According to this theory, in compliance the rewards are higher than the costs of the relationship

The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient matrix revealed a positive correlation between likelihood of marriage and success of marriage ( $r = .49$ ;  $r^2 = .24$ ). This finding is consistent with Secord et al. (1976) statement about how rewarding relationships continue to develop over time. A satisfied couple is more likely to get married than an unsatisfied couple. Marriage is also more successful for the satisfied couple than it is for the unsatisfied couple. These findings helped reveal some interesting information regarding conflict management, but some modifications to the present study could be implemented.

#### Critique of Study

The present study revealed some interesting trends, but with a few modifications the study may have revealed more about dating relationships. The sample chosen was not a random sample nor was it a representative sample of individuals aged 18-20 years old. A convenience sample of students enrolled in psychology courses was used to gather data. Psychology classes were chosen because the researcher could obtain a large amount of data in a short period of time. Most of the

participants had similar characteristics; e.g. dating status, and the fact of being enrolled in college. This limited the results to trends among students in psychology courses .

Use of a more diverse sample would get participants more representative of the general population.. A few changes to the data collection could result in a more diverse sample. Classes other than psychology classes could have been used. Use of participants that weren't as familiar with psychological studies may have led to participants responding more truthfully.

Another way to obtain a more diverse sample is to recruit participants from off campus. In doing so, the participants would be older and of different racial, ethnic, and economical backgrounds. A wider age range gives the researcher different viewpoints on relationships. A more mature individual may have a different viewpoint on relationships in general. Many of these individuals have engaged in various relationships with different people. They have experienced what techniques are helpful in making a relationship work or fall apart. They would therefore be reflected in filling out the survey.

College students may have been completed the survey in a hurry. Most of the college participants filled out the survey near the end of class. These individuals may have hurried and not thoroughly read the instructions or questions because they knew they could leave after completing the survey. Also, most students received extra credit for participating in the study. Students received the same amount of extra credit regardless of the amount of time spent on the survey. This could have led to some individuals not taking as much time in completing the survey packets.

A third way to obtain a more diverse sample and results is to use couples who are actually in current dating relationships. These couples may take the survey more seriously because they may be more interested in the results. Perhaps the couple may use one to the conflict management

strategies described. They may want to know how their conflict management strategy compares to other strategies. These differences in data collection could have revealed even more interesting information about how dating couples manage conflict.

A second improvement that could have been made to the present study would be to examine in more detail the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and the conflict management scenarios. It is very important for a study to have strong reliability and validity. A test-retest reliability was conducted using a small group of students. Also, validity testing on the conflict management scenarios was conducted using a small student group. The reliability of the questionnaire was moderate, but the validity for the conflict management scenarios for the current study was fairly low. Both could have been higher. The highest reliability score was a +0.67 for success of marriage. The lowest score was a +0.42 for male satisfaction. The highest validity score of the four scenarios only had 55% agreement that the coin toss scenario was the most effective way to manage conflict. The lowest percentage of agreement was at 30% that the confrontation scenario was the least effect way to manage conflict.

The questionnaire and scenarios used in the study were constructed by the researcher. Their reliability and validity were unknown and when they were tested, the questionnaire obtained a moderate reliability score, but the scenarios obtained a low validity rating. The questionnaire and the scenarios were handed out to small groups of students. When it was determined that both were moderate to low in the percentage of agreement, more extensive reliability and validity testing could have been conducted.

A couple of changes to the questionnaire may have helped it achieve a higher reliability score. Using different wording could have made it easier to understand. The more people

understand the question they are answering, the more truthful they can respond. Also, a more detailed instruction sheet may have helped participants know what was expected of them when completing the survey. Another way to increase reliability would be to use a questionnaire with the reliability already established. The present questionnaire was loosely based on the Hendrick (1988) The Relationship Scale. The researcher could have used the complete scale or a similar one.

The questionnaire and scenarios could have been reevaluated by the researcher and they could have been modified. After changes were made, the questionnaire and the scenarios could have been handed out to the same groups to read and rate again. This process of modification and reevaluation of the questionnaire and scenarios could have continued until the reliability and validity were higher. For a questionnaire to have good reliability, the scores should be around 0.70 or 0.80. Agreement of 80% among the participants on which conflict management strategy was the most effective and which was the least effective should have been reached.

A third improvement that could be made to the present study could be to use different or more conflict management strategies. All four conflict management strategies used in the scenarios were either non-realistic or dysfunctional. Participants did not have the option of reading about a couple who managed conflict in a positive way. A positive conflict management scenario could have been used as a comparison tool for each of the dysfunctional conflict management scenarios. The researcher could have looked at how much the dysfunctional strategies differed from the positive strategy. The positive conflict management strategy scenario could have been a constant that the researcher looked at to help rank the other conflict management strategies.

Also, more conflict management strategies could have been used as independent variables. Only four conflict management strategies were used in the present study. There are numerous ways

in which couples manage conflict. Adding a few more conflict management strategies, such as, cooperation or negotiation into the present study would have given the researcher a wider range of strategies to observe when trying to determine which are the most effective when managing a couple's conflict.

The present study was assumed a person only used one conflict management strategy when trying to resolve or manage conflict. In real life, people use different strategies when dealing with conflict. The scenarios used in the present study could have been more realistic if a combination of conflict management strategies were used. A combination of these within the scenario could have allowed participants to relate more to the people in the scenario. By relating more to the scenario, the answers would reflect participants' feelings more accurately. Improving the scenarios may have helped the study reveal more interesting and realistic trends about which conflict management strategies are more effective. It may have shown which combinations of strategies are more effective when used together.

The present study could be modified and improved by implementing the changes suggested above. The changes could reveal different trends when studying dating relationships and conflict management. These changes would bring about their own problems and improvements that would need to be made. One potential problem would be if the study was conducted over a long period of time. As time passed by, researchers may run out of money to fund the research or participants may eventually drop out of the study. These modifications could open the door for future research projects.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

When conducting a research project, the door opens up for future research. Future

researchers can take the current study, modify it, and add to it to obtain more information concerning dating relationships. The first step for future research may be to conduct a pilot study. This study could help the researcher discover any weaknesses in the design of the project. Perhaps the validity of the scenarios is low. This could be detected during the pilot study.

The scenarios could be reconstructed to increase the validity of the scenarios. A pilot study could also reveal certain trends about the participants. Certain age groups may have a tendency to answer the questions in a way that differs from other age groups. This may catch the researchers attention. Perhaps during the pilot study, participants were asked their racial or ethnic background. Sometimes people from different backgrounds have different views about dating.

Another trend that may show up in the pilot study could be between dating and non-dating participants. Perhaps a social desirability test such as, the Marlow-Crowne would help discard participants who only want to give the desired answers. A pilot study could be a good addition to any research project.

The second modification for future research could be to change the scenarios. A new twist may be to use the same conflict management strategies but see how they affect friendships. The scenarios could have friends dealing with conflict in the scenarios. The researcher could look at different types of friendship. He or she may want to look at female to female friendships, male to male friendships, or male to female friendships. The researcher may want to compare the three groups to see if any trends emerge. Same sex friendships may be viewed differently than opposite sex friendships. Male and female friendships could also be viewed differently from one another. The researcher may want to see if a male participant rates female to female friendship differently than he would male to male friendship. It could be an interesting concept to explore.

Another way to look at friendship could be to look for age trends. The scenarios could describe friends who are approximately the same age or different ages. The researcher could determine if participants rate the younger person as less cooperative, or perhaps they may rate the older person as less willing to try and manage conflict successfully.

For future studies, researchers could also study how friends manage conflict at different stages in their friendship. The researcher could establish friendship categories such as, beginning friendship, close friendship, and best friends. Perhaps as the level of friendship commitment increases, friends may try harder to manage disagreements more successfully. Also, a particular conflict management strategy may be more effective at one stage of friendship than at another stage. This study could be conducted by providing the participants with scenarios to read or allow open-ended responses to various conflict scenarios. The participants could be asked what conflict management strategy they use and if they think it is successful. They could also be asked to state the conflict management strategy their friend uses and how successful they perceive it to be when trying to manage conflict. Using friends as the focal point could help researchers obtain interesting information concerning conflict management strategies.

The third suggestion for future research would be to use participants who are currently in dating relationships which allows for future study of conflict in intimacy and sexual disagreements. There are a few ways to obtain information on these couples. The first step could be to have each person in the relationship read a scenario and answer questions concerning the people in the scenario. Then the participants could state how they thought their partner answered the same set of questions. After collecting data, the researcher could see how each person felt about the conflict management strategy used in the scenario. The researcher could look for any gender differences

when rating the conflict management strategies on their effectiveness for dealing with conflict.

Another aspect to look at could be the perception of how the participants think their partners would answer the questions. Do male and female participants rate their partners as using a similar conflict management strategy to their own strategy? Do partners use different conflict management strategies when dealing with different types of conflict? These would be two interesting questions for the researcher to try and answer.

The second step in using participants who are currently dating could be a questionnaire about conflict management strategies without using scenarios. The participants could be free to provide answers about a variety of conflict management strategies. They could list the ones they believe are the most successful. They could also list the strategies their partner uses the most often. The researcher could compare the couple's two lists and see how similar or different they are concerning conflict management strategies employed. The researcher may want to use a videotape and record the couples talking about how they manage conflict. He or she could look at the couples' body language or tone of voice as they talk about conflict in their relationship.

The third step in using participants currently in a dating relationship could be to divide them into groups depending upon how serious the relationship is at the time of the study. Relationships could be divided into categories such as, beginning relationships, steady dating relationships, and serious dating relationships. Couples could be asked to rate their own relationship. Here, the researcher could see if couples agree upon how serious the relationship has progressed. He or she could then look and see if people rate one conflict management strategy as more successful than how their partners rate the same strategy. Also, one could see if the different categories of dating couples rated the conflict management strategies differently. The researcher



could see if a conflict management strategy seemed to be ranked higher when the relationship was just beginning, but perhaps it was ranked lower as the relationship progressed. As the relationship progressed, the researcher may want to look and see how participants thought their partners would answer the questions. Can couples in a serious relationship more accurately predict how their partners will feel about certain conflict management strategies? This concept could reveal some very interesting information on how serious a relationship has progressed and how that affects the usage of conflict management strategies. All of the information that was gathered in this study and the information that could be gathered in future research may be very useful to certain categories of people.

#### Usefulness to Potential Consumers

Some categories of people who might especially be interested in conflict management research are: academics, students, researchers, counselors, and everyday people. In the following paragraphs information is provided on how these groups can relate to this study to provide insight into conflict management strategies. The academic world could be interested in how the study is accessible to a wide range of people and how the study educates those people on conflict management. Students could use the study to build upon and generate more research. Researchers may be interested in the methodology of the study to gain information on future research tactics, such as how to collect data. Counselors may be interested in the results of the study to see if past research trends have been supported. Finally, everyday people can use this study as a resource on conflict management strategies so that they can try to integrate them their personal relationships.

People may be curious about studies involving a dating relationship. Conflict is inevitable in any relationship and this study describes various techniques to try to help manage conflict.

Couples probably try a trial and error approach initially but eventually settle on one strategy. If they are aware of other approaches, they might take an in-depth look at the study, explore the strategies, and settle on a more effective one. It could be a guide as to what not to do when trying to manage conflict in a relationship. Perhaps an individual uses one of the conflict management strategies in his or her relationship and now he or she wants to see how it compares to other strategies. The individual may realize his or her conflict management strategy does not seem to be very successful, or the individual may do more research in order to find a more successful strategy. This study could educate couples on conflict management strategies. It provides useful information and it makes references to more information and research on conflict management. People will have easy access to this study. It will be posted on the Internet so that people from all over the country can use this study as a reference tool.

Students might generate ideas for research on conflict management from this study. A high school student may find this study useful and interesting if writing a paper on conflict management. In college, students may decide to major in psychology. As a graduate student, the person may use this study to help generate new and unique ways of researching conflict management, such as, conducting a meta-analysis. In a meta- analysis study, this project could be part of the data collection.

A third group of consumers would be researchers. Researchers are interested in the methodology of a study. They want to know how data were collected and how the results were obtained. The current research chose a social perception scenario and questionnaire based study to gather information on dating couples and conflict management. Researchers may look at the construction of the survey packet before designing their own study. They may choose to use a

different method for data collection such as videotaped interviews. They may also want to use the popular scenario based survey.

Professional relationship and marriage counselors would be interested in this study. It would be useful to them to keep up to date on research involving relationship maintenance. Counselors are interested in the results of research projects. If a counselor has a couple who is having difficulty managing conflict, he or she can use this study as a reference tool. The counselor could point out some of the results of this study such as how men seem to report more satisfaction with their relationship than women. The counselor could have the couple review the study and see if they use one of the strategies described. Perhaps the counselor may want to discuss the strategies briefly with the couple. It may be pointed out that this study found compliance to be the most effective way to manage conflict when talking about male and female satisfaction. He or she may want to explain other ways the study could be a benefit to the couple's relationship.

This study could be of interest to anyone who wants to read about conflict management. Perhaps this study could be useful to some aspects of people's personal lives. A partner may be exhibiting one of these conflict management strategies. The people themselves may be exhibiting the strategy. They may want to see how effective the conflict management strategy is when compared to other strategies. People may be looking for a different conflict management strategy to employ in their relationships. They can read this study and decide whether they want to use one of the strategies described. Some people may realize their method of conflict management is not very effective and may want to change the way they interact with others.

People may read this study when dealing with conflict in other areas of their personal life. A person may be having a problem managing conflict when dealing with a sibling. The person may

want to use one of the conflict management strategies mentioned to get his or her way with his or her sibling. If a girl has a brother, confrontation may be useful to her. Research suggests that men want to avoid confrontation. The sister may know this and use confrontation to her advantage.

Another person may be having problems managing conflict with a boss or supervisor. The worker's original approach to conflict management may lean towards confrontation when he or she deals with disagreements in his or her personal life. This approach in the workplace may be endangering his or her employment status. Reading this study could give the person a new approach to conflict management. The worker may become more compliant so that the conflict will become less apparent at work.

Conflict management can be an interesting topic for research, and, as stated in the preceding paragraphs, it can appeal to a variety of consumers. Conflict management has been studied in the past, it is being studied in the present, and it will be studied in the future. This is a good aspect about research. Details of research projects can be changed to generate even more research. Research is always evolving and ever changing. Clearly, this unsettled state characterizes the whole area of research in conflict management. It is hoped that the outcome of this research project will serve to aid future researchers in strengthening methodological strategies.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Instructions for Participants

**Students under the age of 18 are not eligible to participate in this study**

On the following pages, you will be asked to read a hypothetical short story regarding a dating couple's relationship and to answer the questions that follow. After you complete the survey questions, you will be asked to answer a few questions providing information about yourself and the hypothetical short story you read.

Once you have completed all aspects of the survey packet, please return it to the investigator.

Remember that all of your answers are completely confidential and in no way will your name ever be associated with the answers you have provided.

If you should have any questions about the study, contact the principal investigator

(1-423-439-4424).

Thank you for your assistance.

## Appendix B.

### Conflict Management Scenarios

1.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Melissa, who grew up as an only child is used to getting her way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship she has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and she now wants to make all of the decisions.

So, whenever there is strong disagreement the couple has decided the best solution would be to let Melissa flip a coin, thereby leaving the final decision to chance. They believe this is the best way to resolve the conflict and still be satisfied with their relationship. They have decided not to become mad if the coin toss does not go in their favor.

2.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Tom, who grew up as an only child is used to getting his way all of the time. Recently, in their dating relationship, he has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and he now wants to make all of the decisions.

So, whenever there is strong disagreement the couple has decided the best solution would be to let Tom flip a coin, thereby leaving the final decision to chance. They believe this is the best way to resolve the conflict and still be satisfied with their relationship. They have decided not to become mad if the coin toss does not go in their favor.

3.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Melissa, who grew up as an only child is used to getting her way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship she has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and she now wants to make all of the decisions. This exercise of power makes Tom resentful of the change, but he continues to go along with it. He attempts to get back at Melissa on occasion through unexpected stubbornness or by being late for dates.

4.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Tom, who grew up as an only child is used to getting his way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship he has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and he now wants to make all of the decisions. This exercise of power makes Melissa resentful of the change, but she continues to go along with it. She attempts to get back at Tom on occasion through unexpected stubbornness or by being late for dates.

5.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Melissa, who grew up as an only child is used to getting her way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship she has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and she now wants to make all of the decisions.

Now, whenever a problem arises, Tom gives into Melissa and lets her make the final decision. He finds by doing this, it reduces the tension and helps the couple avoid conflict. He has decided that maintaining the relationship is more important than having input into the decision making. So, every time a decision needs to be made, Tom lets Melissa make it.

6.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Tom, who grew up as an only child is used to getting his way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship he has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and he now wants to make all of the decisions.

Now, whenever a problem arises, Melissa gives into Tom and lets him make the final decision. She finds by doing this, it reduces the tension and helps the couple avoid conflict. She has decided that maintaining the relationship is more important than having input into the decision making. So, every time a decision needs to be made, Melissa lets Tom make it.

7.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Melissa, who grew up as an only child is used to getting her way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship she has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and she now wants to make all of the decisions.

Tom is getting tired of Melissa's actions. So now, whenever a problem arises and Melissa tries to make the decision, Tom will begin to argue with her. He thinks he should have a more significant role in the decision making. Consequently, the couple is constantly arguing over even insignificant matters and who should make decisions about the relationship.



8.

Tom and Melissa met during freshman orientation and there seemed to be an instant attraction between them. The two decide to start dating casually. After a few months, the relationship becomes more serious. Often, Tom and Melissa have differing views on how to resolve problems.

Early in the relationship, they decided to openly discuss the best way to resolve their problems. Each time a conflict arose they sat down and fully discussed how to resolve it. Each person gave his or her opinion and they were receptive of each other's opinion.

However, as time went on, problems would often arise in which they could not come to an agreement. Tom, who grew up as an only child is used to getting his way all of the time. Recently, in the dating relationship he has begun to exercise more and more control over the decision making and he now wants to make all of the decisions.

Melissa is getting tired of Tom's actions. So now, whenever a problem arises and Tom tries to make the decision, Melissa will begin to argue with him. She thinks she should have a more significant role in the decision making. Consequently, the couple is constantly arguing over even insignificant matters and who should make decisions about the relationship.

Appendix C

Relationship Questionnaire

Please read the following statements and circle the number that best represents your feelings about each question.

1. How satisfied do you think the female is in her dating relationship?

---not very satisfying

---very satisfying

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. How satisfied do you think the male is in his dating relationship?

---not very satisfying

---very satisfying

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. How likely do you think the relationship will lead to marriage?

---not very likely

---very likely

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. If the relationship does lead to marriage, how successful do you think it will be?

---not very successful

---very successful

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix D

Demographics

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_
3. Class Rank (circle one)      Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Graduate
4. Status (circle one)      Single    Married    Divorced    Separated
5. Are you currently in a dating relationship? (circle one)      Yes      No
  - A. If yes, how long have you been dating? Please be as specific as you can by indicating years, months, days  
Years \_\_\_\_\_  
Months \_\_\_\_\_  
Days \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. If yes, how often do you and your partner argue per month? \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. What do you most often argue about? \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. When you do argue, how do you resolve the conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions about the scenario you read:

1. Where did the couple meet? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How was conflict resolved at the beginning of the relationship? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who grew up as an only child? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the couple now resolve conflict? \_\_\_\_\_

## VITA

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