

2-7-1996

Relationship of Marital Types and Conflict Styles

Lynn Marie Stanek
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds



Part of the [Speech and Rhetorical Studies Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Stanek, Lynn Marie, "Relationship of Marital Types and Conflict Styles" (1996). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 5105.

<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.6981>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Lynn Marie Stanek for the Master of Science in Speech Communication were presented February 7, 1996, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

COMMITTEE APPROVALS:

[REDACTED]

L. David Ritchie, Chair

[REDACTED]

Susan B. Poulsen

[REDACTED]

Barry F. Anderson
Representative of the Office of
Graduate Studies

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL:

[REDACTED]

Rhea Paul, Acting Chair
Department of Speech Communication

* * * * *

ACCEPTED FOR PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY BY THE LIBRARY

b [REDACTED]

on A March 1996

An abstract of the thesis of Lynn Marie Stanek for the Master of Science in Speech Communication presented February 7, 1996.

Title: Relationship of Marital Types and Conflict Styles

Communication is an integral part of all relationships. The intent of this study was to discover if certain individual preferences for approaching conflict occur in a significant fashion between the partners of particular types of marriages. In addition, this study meant to better understand how conflict is perceived and responded to, in marriage and/or long term relationships.

Fitzpatrick's (1977) Relational Dimensions Inventory (RDI), was used for this study to characterize three dimensions of marriage: interdependence, ideology, and conflict engagement/avoidance, resulting in the following marital types: Traditionals, Independents, Separates, and Mixed. Rahim's (1983) instrument, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI), was also used to measure five independent patterns of handling interpersonal conflict:

Integrating, Dominating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Obliging. Based on prior work of Fitzpatrick (1975, 1983, 1988) and Rahim (1983), this study asked: *Do conflict styles vary across marital types?* Individual hypotheses examined occurrences of particular conflict styles within specific marital types.

The data represent 103 couples. Data were derived from a Likert type survey instrument of Fitzpatrick's RDI and Rahim's ROCI-II, with a total of 65 questions. Chi-square and cross-tabulation were used to reveal associations between marital type and conflict style. Bonferroni procedure for multiple hypotheses was applied.

Cross-tabulation did not indicate a relationship between marital types and conflict styles. One hypothesis was statistically supported. As couple level data produced few significant results, post hoc analysis at the individual level was conducted. Conflict styles were conceptually divided into concern for self and concern for other. ANOVA was run on marital type, other orientation, and satisfaction. Significant results are reported for wives.

Although the relationship between marital types and conflict styles is not strongly supported with this research, an association between marital type, conflict style, and satisfaction seems to exist. Survey instruments may not adequately address or measure conflict styles in the context of personal and intimate relationship. Qualitative methods of repeat interviewing may prove more beneficial in future research on conflict styles and marital types. Additional investigation into the role of concern for self/other orientation may prove the most valuable and interesting for learning more about marriages and relationships.

RELATIONSHIP OF MARITAL TYPES
AND CONFLICT STYLES

by

LYNN MARIE STANEK

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Portland State University
1996

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would to acknowledge the direction and insights contributed by Dr. L. David Ritchie, Dr. Susan Poulsen, and Dr. Barry F. Anderson. I wish express my gratitude and thanks to Miles Jackson for his immense contribution to this thesis and to my understanding of statistical analysis.

Special thanks to Michael Stickler for his encouragement and patience, to Debra Elam for Thursday night counsel, the graduate teaching assistants in the PSU Speech Communication Department for their unending support and--most especially--to Emma Stanek for her unwavering belief in my abilities.

I would also like to acknowledge the principles of Murphy's law, whose theories this research appears to support. In addition, I would like to thank those included in the sample of desperation, who participated in this research, and comprise the reported results.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	ii
LIST OF TABLES.	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
Research Context	1
Background	1
II THEORY	10
Background	10
Fitzpatrick's Marital Types.	11
Rahim's Conflict Styles.	17
Hypotheses	19
III METHODS.	22
Subjects	22
Questionnaire Materials.	22
Procedure.	24
IV RESULTS.	27
Introduction	27
Conflict Styles Among Traditional Couple Types	32
Conflict Styles Among Independent Couple Types	33

	Conflict Styles Among Separate Couple Types	34
	Conflict Style Among Mixed Couple Types.	34
	Post Hoc Analysis.	37
V	DISCUSSION	40
	Implications	42
	Limitations.	47
	Future Research.	49
	REFERENCES.	51
APPENDIX		
A	FITZPATRICK'S RELATIONAL DIMENSION INVENTORY (MODIFIED)	54
B	RAHIM'S ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT INVENTORY II (MODIFIED).	57
C	SATISFACTION QUESTIONS	60
D	CONSENT FORMS.	62
E	DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS.	64
F	E-MAIL REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	69
G	INSTRUCTION SHEET	71

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.	RDI Marital Types.	28
2.	Marital Types and Conflict Styles.	31
3.	Occurrences of Compromising Style Among Traditional Couples.	33
4.	Occurrences of Integrating Style Among Independent Couples.	34
5.	Occurrences of Dominating Style Among Separate Husbands.	35
6.	Occurrences of Obliging Style Among Traditional Wives.	36

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.	Similarities of Couple Distributions . . .	28
2.	ROCI Conflict Styles	31
3.	Wives' Marital Type, Wives' Other Orientation, and Wives' Satisfaction . .	38

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research Context

The intent of this study was, at the most macro level, to discover more about the possible relationship between marital types and conflict styles. A clearer understanding of how conflict is regarded, and responded to, may contribute to our understanding of how individuals function in marriage and/or long-term relationships.

Background

Berger and Kellner (1964) wrote that society has provided marital partners with a "taken-for-granted image of marriage" (p. 10) but that the lived experience of the partners will require dramatically altered definitions--or a "re-construction"--of themselves and marriage when confronted with the realities of marriage; this reconstruction primarily occurs through conversation. Partners contribute their respective conceptions of reality, which are "*talked through*" repeatedly until a world, or reality, is built and continuously repaired and "refurnished." These authors further contend that marriage is not mere adapting to new roles, but involves

"stepping into a new world" (p. 21). Oftentimes, this "new world" is abandoned, and the marriage ends in divorce. However, Berger and Kellner believed that divorce can be explained by the importance that individuals place on the marriage and argue that divorce occurs because the marriage becomes so important that there is "little tolerance" for less than a completely successful marital arrangement.

Fitzpatrick (1987) appeared to support this idea, stating that high divorce rates do not suggest dissatisfaction with marriage, but dissatisfaction with one's spouse. One question that arises is: does the manner in which partners regard and respond to conflict within their marriage contribute to their dissatisfaction with their spouse?

Prior to Fitzpatrick's (1988) work, the primary focus of marital research had been marital satisfaction (Acitelli, 1992; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; VanLear, 1990), with satisfaction being a subjective evaluation of the marriage as happy or gratifying. Fitzpatrick (1977) focused attention on the communication interaction within marriages. The typology Fitzpatrick developed for characterizing the communication among married couples conceptualizes three dimensions of marriage: these dimensions consist of interdependence, ideology, and conflict engagement or avoidance (Fitzpatrick 1988;

Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988). Fitzpatrick's instrument--the Relational Dimensions Inventory (RDI)--provides a series of questions directed toward these three major dimensions of marriage. From individuals' responses to the questionnaire, degrees of ideology, interdependence, and conflict engagement/avoidance can be identified and three "pure" marital types emerge; Fitzpatrick referred to these marital types as Traditional, Separates, and Independents. Traditional marital partners agree on roles, issues (Fitzpatrick, 1988), and experience few conflicts (Fitzpatrick, 1987). An Independent marital type is identified by a combination of inquiry about the needs of the partner, and direct demands. Separate couples hold conventional sex roles and reach consensus on marital issues; yet, they have the least expressive communication style (Fitzpatrick, 1987). The final marital relationship categorized by Fitzpatrick is the Mixed marital type (as opposed to the "pure" types described above). Within this marriage, different marital types may be present. For instance, the husband may be a Separate and the wife a Traditional. Although many combinations may occur, early research indicates that the Separate husband and Traditional wife occurred most frequently within the Mixed marital type (Fitzpatrick, 1987). Of the Mixed couples, Separate husbands with Traditional wives exhibit less cohesiveness than other

couple types, and have a tendency toward disagreements on marital and family issues (Fitzpatrick, 1987).

Although the role of interpersonal conflict is present in research dealing with marriages and close relationships, interpersonal conflict is also of interest and study in the organizational realm.

Rahim (1983) drew heavily from the prior research of Blake and Mouton (1969) and Thomas and Kilmann (1978), whose research examined interpersonal conflict in the organizational setting. Underlying much of this prior research on interpersonal conflict is a theme of concern--for oneself and concern for another. These researchers propose that the combination of these two dimensions result in five styles of handling interpersonal conflict, although terminology for the modes has varied among researchers.

As cited in Thomas and Kilmann (1978), Blake and Mouton conceptualized five styles or modes of conflict by distinguishing between these two dimensions--concern for self/other--in their research on conflict resolution behavior. These five modes are: forcing (high concern for self/low for other), withdrawing (low concern for self/low concern for other), smoothing (high concern for other/low concern for self), compromising (concern for self and other), and problem solving (high concern for self/high concern for other). In Managerial Grid labs

conducted by Blake and Mouton, subjects ranked five statements from most to least typical as descriptions of their behavior and were asked to select the statement which they felt best described them.

Thomas and Kilmann (1978) expanded on Blake and Mouton's work through the development of the bi-polar MODE conflict instrument, which has 30 paired statements describing modes of handling conflict. Respondents choose the statement in each pair that best matches their behavior in a conflict situation. Thomas and Kilmann's five styles are: avoiding, compromising, competitive, collaborative, and accommodating. Kilmann and Thomas (1975) described these five conflict-handling modes in the following manner:

competing is assertive and uncooperative,
collaborating is assertive and cooperative,
avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative,
accommodating is unassertive and cooperative,
and compromising is intermediate in both
cooperativeness and assertiveness. (p. 971)

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI-II) measures five independent patterns that represent styles of handling interpersonal conflict: integrating (concern for self/other), obliging (concern for other), dominating (concern for self), avoiding (concern for self), and compromising (concern for self/other) (Rahim 1983). Rahim's work has been directed primarily at the organizational setting; however, the notion of assertiveness (own concerns) and cooperation

(another's concerns) have also been used in the marital realm. Schaap, Buunk, and Kerkstra (1988) focused on two dimensions of conflict resolution behavior: caring for the interests of oneself, or assertiveness; and caring for the interest of the relationship, or cooperation.

Schaap, Buunk, and Kerkstra (1988)--borrowed from the work of Blake and Mouton, in their research on marital conflict--distinguished five styles as pushing-aggression, avoidance, compromise, soothing, and problem solving. Pushing-aggression is a style that sees one's own interests in conflict with the interests of the spouse. This style has a "minimal respect for the spouse's feelings" (p. 218). Avoidance is an emotional or physical retreat, and unwillingness to discuss the situation. Compromise involves concession from both of the partners and looks for a fair solution. Soothing attempts to prevent open conflict, or the expression of negative emotions. This style also tries to cover up the differences between the partners. Problem solving is an open expression of feeling, clarifies misunderstanding, and looks for mutually satisfying solutions. According to these authors, this typology emphasizes avoidance, cooperation and competition as strategies for marital conflict resolution.

Thus, pushing-aggression is a typical competitive strategy, compromise and problem solving constitute co-operative strategies,

while soothing behavior, and . . . avoidance can be seen as avoidance strategies. (p. 218)

These two basic dimensions, or self/other concern, are present and relevant for either the organizational or spousal setting. Research emphasizes the "consistency of conflict responses across situations" (Utley, Richardson, & Pilkington, 1989) and suggests that individuals may employ consistent conflict styles across many situations. Sternberg and Soriano (1984) reported individuals as having consistency in modes of conflict resolution across personal, organizational, and international domains. As the research suggests that *style* may be related to personality (as opposed to being strictly situational), it follows that these conflict style instruments could be adaptable to marital and/or relationship research, although the ROCI's Likert-type format may make it more adaptable for use with Fitzpatrick's RDI than the styling behavior method of Blake and Mouton's (1969) work, or the bi-polar format found in the instrument designed by Thomas and Kilmann (1978).

From the prior research on marital types by Fitzpatrick (1977, 1983, 1987, 1988), and Rahim's (1983) focus on conflict styles, the following question can be asked: Do conflict styles vary across marital types? Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the ROCI-II and its adaptability to Fitzpatrick's RDI, the following hypotheses were tested:

1. Traditional partners will exhibit a Compromising conflict style more frequently than other marital types.
2. Independent partners will exhibit an Integrating conflict style more frequently than other marital types.
3. Separate partners will exhibit an Avoiding conflict style more frequently than other marital types.
4. Separate husbands in a Mixed couple type will exhibit a Dominating style more frequently than husbands of other marital types.
5. Traditional wives in a Mixed couple type will exhibit an Obliging conflict style more frequently than wives of other marital types.

Respondents were recruited in public settings, as well as by snowball sample, and electronic and regular mail services. The majority of subjects are from an academic setting.

The data for this study represent 103 couples. Data were derived from a questionnaire which asked for responses regarding both relationships and disagreements. Demographic information was also requested. The questions were a hybrid survey instrument using a shortened version of Fitzpatrick's RDI and an adapted version of Rahim's ROCI-II; 65 questions were presented on the questionnaire. The couples were asked to sign consent forms, not to compare answers, and to complete the surveys separately.

Based on analysis of this data, some associations between marital type and conflict style appear to exist.

Background information on the research and theories relevant to marital types and conflict management styles are discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III examines the subjects, questionnaire materials, and procedures used in this study, while Chapter IV discusses the statistical analyses used to interpret the data for each hypothesis. Lastly, Chapter V considers the limitations of this sample, the implications of this research, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

THEORY

Background

Burggraf and Sillars (1987) argued that research that helps to identify different types of relationships would better serve our understanding of marriage, rather than research that argues for a single "sex-linked pattern across all relationships" (p. 292). Rather than focus on satisfaction or sex-linked patterns, Fitzpatrick (1977) developed a typology of marriages built on the work of Kantor and Lehr (1975) who argued that couples establish patterns of interaction through the ways they use their space, time, and energy to realize the basic goals of marriage: affect, power, and meaning (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 64; Kantor & Lehr, 1975). From this prior research, Fitzpatrick examined the contrasting traditional/therapeutic ideologies, the need for autonomy/interdependence that exists within marital relationships, and the attitudes manifested in the patterns of "problems-solving communication" that a family develops to deal with these dichotomies that exist within the marital relationship.

The two contrasting ideological orientations are the therapeutic, and the traditional orientation. The therapeutic perspective views love and marriage in terms of the "psychological gratification" given to the individuals (Fitzpatrick, 1988). The traditional ideology, or orientation, views love and marriage as providing a stable and committed relationship which ties the couple to society at large. These conceptual opposites suggest that there are different bases for marriages. These opposing values may, however, contribute to the couple experiencing stress and tension. Couples seeking to develop and maintain a connection and togetherness--yet retain a personal autonomy and independence--may experience stress when there are differences in the degree to which partners experience and desire interdependence and autonomy.

Fitzpatrick's Marital Types

Fitzpatrick (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988) investigated the communication behaviors between the spouses and examined how information is encoded, retrieved and processed regarding the spouse and the marriage. The typology Fitzpatrick developed for characterizing the communication among married couples conceptualizes three dimensions of marriage (Fitzpatrick 1988; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Noller & Fitzpatrick,

1988). These dimensions consist of ideology, interdependence, and conflict engagement or avoidance. Fitzpatrick's instrument, the Relational Dimensions Inventory (RDI), identifies the couple's tendencies toward certain ideologies, degree of interdependence, and conflict behaviors through a 77-question, seven-point Likert-type scale. First, Fitzpatrick (1988) looked at ideology, which involves the "beliefs, standards and values" that individuals have regarding their relationship (p. 99). Values held about marriage and family guide interactions and also affect the perception individuals have of their interaction outcomes. Fitzpatrick (1988) looked for responses that suggest either traditional ideology, such as honoring traditional customs about child rearing and infidelity, or an ideology of uncertainty and change, which reflects beliefs that each partner should develop their own potential and that the ideal relationship is spontaneous and humorous.

Next, a couple's interdependence is related to the connectedness that the partners experience "physically, temporally, and psychologically" (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 99). The amount of sharing, companionship, organization of household space, and use of time are indicators of a couple's interdependence. Highly interdependent couples will spend more time together and their time will be arranged to promote togetherness and companionship.

The third dimension focuses on conflict engagement and avoidance. Over time, individuals inevitably experience conflict or have disagreement with their partner/spouse. However, couples vary as to the degree they are willing to engage in--or actively avoid--conflict.

Analysis of subjects' responses to the RDI reveals varying degrees of ideology, interdependence, and conflict engagement/avoidance. Four marital types emerge; Fitzpatrick (1988) referred to these types as Traditional, Separates, Independents, and Mixed.

Traditional marital types exhibit a high degree of both sharing and interdependence. A high degree of companionship is also exhibited and reinforced by regular daily time schedules. In a Traditional relationship, more emphasis is placed on stability than on marital satisfaction. The partners in a Traditional marital type hold conventional values regarding relationships and agree on such things as a woman taking her husband's last name, etc. (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Traditionals have a more open communicative style than other marital types and are likely to convey positive feelings to their partner as well as engage in greater self-disclosure to their spouse.

Witteman and Fitzpatrick (1986) reported that:

. . . while these couples are likely to seek compliance, they are not likely to employ

messages that would disrupt the stability of the relationship, threaten the other, or raise doubts about the spouse's values. (p. 133)

Burggraf and Sillars (1987) noted that Traditionals agree about discussion of conflict and exercise "tactful restraint." Fitzpatrick (1983) asserted that Traditionals are fairly restrained in their communication--taking the other's feelings into account. Traditionals are also attentive to the worries and concerns of their partner. These couples hold conventional attitudes toward cultural stereotypes for masculine and feminine behavior, agree on family issues, hold similar ideas regarding affection expression, experience few conflicts, and have not considered separation or divorce (Fitzpatrick, 1988). Traditionals tend to emphasize sharing, conventional values, and sex roles (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

Like Traditionals, Independents maintain high levels of companionship and sharing. Independents attempt to stay "psychologically close to their spouses" (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 101); however, they place more emphasis on individual autonomy (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994) and may keep autonomous spaces separate from those of their partner. In addition to having separate spaces, Independent partners have a tendency toward irregular daily time schedules. Also, Independents' ideology differs from that of Traditionals; Independents do not believe the marriage should constrain the individual's

freedom. These couples also emphasize spontaneity in their relationship (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Independent couples are assertive in their spousal interactions and may engage in conflicts over both large or small issues (Fitzpatrick, 1988).

Fitzpatrick (1988, p. 103) stated that partners of an Independent marital type have "liberal sex role orientations" and the wives see themselves as "androgynous." Independents disagree on ways of expressing affection, experience less consensus on relational and family issues, and have considered separation or divorce. Despite the tendency not to express positive feelings to one another, these couples have cohesive marriages. Independent partners view themselves as capable of disclosing vulnerabilities to their spouse, but do not see the spouse as able to reciprocate the self-disclosure (Fitzpatrick, 1988). In short, Independent couples are high on sharing and low on traditionalism and conflict avoidance (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994).

Fitzpatrick (1988) described Separates as far less interdependent in their marriages than either Independents or Traditionals. Separates partners share little with one another and are not "very companionable" (p. 101). However, Separates agree that stability and satisfaction in a marriage are important and they tend to keep a

regular daily schedule. Separate husbands and wives embrace conventional sex role orientations. Husbands of this marital type suppose themselves to possess positive masculine characteristics, but the wives feel they have few positive feminine traits. Separate partners reach consensus on many marital issues, although they have the least expressive communication style and exhibit the least self-disclosure of the marital types (Fitzpatrick, 1988). Separates avoid open conflict with their spouse and are "rarely able to coordinate an effective reaction" (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994, p. 277) when conflict does occur.

The final marital relationship categorized by Fitzpatrick is the Mixed marital type (as opposed to the "pure" types described above). In this type of marriage, the wife and husband differ on the definition of the marriage. For example, within the marriage the husband may be a Separate and the wife a Traditional, the Mixed marital type which most frequently occurs (Fitzpatrick, 1988). In these relationships, both partners are oriented toward gender-typed roles, and agree on expressions of affection. However, these couples exhibit less cohesiveness and have a tendency toward disagreement on marital and family issues. Despite the lack of cohesiveness and tendency to disagree, the partners see

themselves as generally fitting a sex-role stereotype and experience satisfaction with the marriage.

Research performed by Fitzpatrick (1988) demonstrates a reasonable equal number of couples are distributed within these three categories. Of 700 couples, the proportions of pure and Mixed couple types are: 20% Traditional, 22% Independent, 17% Independent, and approximately 30% Mixed. In Fitzpatrick's 1988 sample, the Separate/Traditional couple occurs no more frequently than other combinations in the Mixed marital type.

Rahim's Conflict Styles

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II (ROCI-II) measures five independent patterns that represent styles of handling interpersonal conflict: Integrating, Dominating, Compromising, Avoiding, and Obliging (Rahim, 1983). Rahim described each of these five styles, or measures, as follows:

1. An Integrating conflict style involves efforts to reach solutions that are acceptable to both parties. Creative solutions are associated with this conflict style, as is problem solving. An integrating individual exchanges information and examines the differences that arise between themselves and the other. Persons having an Integrating style have a high level of concern for Self and a high concern for the Other.

2. A Dominating style is marked by a "win-lose orientation" or by behavior that forces one's position in order to win. This competitive individual often ignores the expectations, as well as the needs, of the other party. A Dominating individual has a low concern for others and possesses a high degree of concern for self.

3. The Compromising individual seeks a middle-ground position and is willing to exchange concessions in order to reach a mutually acceptable resolution. The compromising position displays both concern for Self and for Others.

4. An Avoiding conflict style may take the form of postponement of confronting an issue, or a withdrawal from a "threatening situation." Avoiding styles tend to "pass the buck," or "sidestep" a situation. This style fails to satisfy either the concerns of the Self or the Other party.

5. The Obliging person tends to minimize differences with another individual and emphasizes the common interests in order to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Persons of this conflict style may neglect their own concerns to satisfy the concern of the other party.

Sternberg and Dobson (1987) wrote that "the frequency of interpersonal conflicts is attested to by the high divorce rate in our society" (p. 794). Individuals are generally consistent in their modes of conflict resolution

"both within and across content domains" and it is important to understand how people resolve conflict (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987, p. 794; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984, p. 115). Identifying conflict styles within marital types may provide a portion of this understanding. More specifically:

Research Question 1: Do conflict styles vary across marital types?

Hypotheses

From Fitzpatrick's (1988) examination of marital types, we know that Traditional marital partners agree on roles, issues, and experience few conflicts (Fitzpatrick, 1987). However, although Traditionals agree about discussion of conflict, they are relatively nonassertive and exercise "tactful restraint" (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987). From Rahim's (1983) work, we know that a compromising style involves a concern for both the Self and the other with both parties seeking a middle-ground. It seems likely that:

Hypothesis 1: Traditional partners will exhibit a Compromising conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

An integrating style is marked by an exchange of information and the desire to reach mutually acceptable solutions. In the Independent marital types, a

combination of inquiry about the needs of the partner, direct demands, and negotiation is utilized (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). As these couples also respond negatively to acts of avoidance by the partner (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987), it follows that:

Hypothesis 2: Independent partners will exhibit an Integrating conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

An avoiding conflict style involves withdrawal from a threatening situation (Rahim, 1983). Although separate couples hold conventional sex roles and reach consensus of marital issues, they have the least expressive communication style (Fitzpatrick, 1987). In addition, these couples are reluctant to engage in open conflict (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987). Therefore, it seems reasonable that:

Hypothesis 3: Separate partners will exhibit an Avoiding conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

Mixed couple types (Separate husband/Traditional wife) exhibit less cohesiveness than other couple types, hold sex-typed role orientations, and have a tendency toward disagreement on marital and family issues. Despite their tendency to disagree, these couples are satisfied with their marriages.

Hypothesis 4: Separate husbands in a Mixed couple type will exhibit a Dominating style more frequently than husbands of other marital types.

Hypothesis 5: Traditional wives in a Mixed couple type will exhibit an Obliging conflict style more frequently than wives of other marital types.

To learn more about how conflict styles represent themselves across marital types, this study was conducted using the methods described in Chapter III. The chapter discusses the subjects, questionnaire materials used, procedures for data collection, and some methodological implications of this research.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Subjects

Of the 103 couples, approximately 10% were drawn from public areas (such as Waterfront Park) and an additional 15% of surveys were distributed through snowball sample via graduate students at Portland State University. The remaining 75% of the sample consists of staff or faculty at Portland Community College. As this portion of the sample consisted of interested couples who requested the surveys, the return rate could be considered high: approximately 80% of the surveys were sent back for inclusion in this study.

The average demographics of this sample are as follows: The participants are between 36-45 years old, and have been married between 5-10 years. The number of years of formal education (past high school) was four or more years. Due to the environment the bulk of the sample was drawn from, these demographics reflect an older and more educated sample than a more random drawing would produce.

Questionnaire Materials

The shortened version of Fitzpatrick's RDI contains 24 questions. This shortened version takes the highest loaded items from the original RDI and includes six questions each for measuring uncertainty, conflict, traditionalism, and sharing (Appendix A). The second half of the survey is the Rahim ROCI-II, adapted to read "spouse/partner" rather than "boss," "subordinate," or "peer." This instrument consists of 28 questions; seven questions directed toward the concept of Integrating, six toward both Obliging and Avoiding, five addressing Dominating, and four questions regarding a Compromising style (Appendix B). In addition, two questions regarding satisfaction were included (Appendix C).

Although the original RDI is a seven-point Likert-type scale, and the ROCI is a five point, both the shortened RDI and the adapted ROCI were adjusted to a six-point scale. Likert scales are a means by which to index questionnaire data. This index provides a culmination of variable indicators; as cumulative scoring is unaffected by the number of response options offered, both instruments were adapted to a six-point scale (Babbie, 1992). Adjusting the scales serves two purposes: (a) scoring the scales as six points keeps respondents from selecting a middle of the road response, such as "somewhat." Somewhat what? Agree or disagree?; (b)

setting each instrument scale to six keeps consistency for the respondent throughout the questionnaire.

Recalculation of means to accommodate this adaptation insures consistency in determining marital types and conflict styles.

Procedure

The original intent had been to gather subjects as a convenience sample from couples' groups organized through local area churches, and recruitment from public areas. A network, or non-random sample in which subjects provide the researcher with additional research participants, was planned (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992), as was random phone solicitation using the Portland area telephone directory.

Unfortunately, recruitment from churches proved unsuccessful. The institutions approached for participation in this research were unreceptive to solicitation of couples within the congregation to respond to the questionnaire. In addition, the churches seemed to have full agendas with groups, classes, and services; neither reserving facilities--or time--for research implementation seemed attainable.

In the public setting, potential subjects were approached and asked if they would participate in the research project. The central idea of the research was

explained and general directions were given. Those agreeing to be surveyed were then given consent forms (Appendix D) and surveys for completion (Appendix E). It proved difficult to find couples interested and willing to participate in the research in public settings. Such areas also proved to be ineffective for administering the survey because of the difficulty in finding a relatively distraction-free area in which to complete the forms.

The network sample was initiated by asking other graduate students in the Speech Communication Department of Portland State University to distribute the surveys to couples whom they felt may be interested in participating in the research. This portion of data collection was reasonably successful, although its contribution to the overall data set was small.

When the difficulties of recruiting a sample for couples research seemed insurmountable, using Electronic Mail Systems (EMS) as a research tool seemed a reasonable alternative for data collection. The participants from Portland Community College (PCC) were recruited through the college-wide Oracle electronic mail system. A request for participants was sent to all mail-users (see Appendix F). Interested persons then requested questionnaires by return e-mail and packets were sent out through U.S. mail, or inter-campus mail. Each packet included two surveys, two consent forms, and one page of instructions for the

participating couple (Appendix G). The surveys were then returned via the fore mentioned mail services.

EMS provided access to all mail-users on the PCC system and proved an effective means to solicit interested couples. It was an inexpensive research medium as well. Nearly all questionnaires were sent out and returned through inter-campus mail, thereby eliminating most postage expenses. Katori (1990) found similar advantages in his research in marketing via electronic communication. The final advantage on EMS was the astonishingly high return rate: nearly 90% of the surveys were returned by the couples who had requested them. This method of recruitment proved so productive as to make additional data collection unnecessary.

Chapter IV examines the results of this research using these methods.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover what relationship may exist between marital types and conflict styles; the hypotheses ask for each marital type (Traditional, Independent, Separate) to display specific tendencies, preferences, or styles (Integrating, Dominating, Obliging, Compromising, Avoiding) when dealing with conflict. The following discusses the finding associated with this study.

After completion of data collection, two SPSS (1993) quick cluster analyses were run to determine the marital types of the individuals and the couples in the sample. The first quick cluster was run allowing the SPSS software default values to determine the marital type; a second quick cluster was run using the specified means established by Fitzpatrick' (1988) research, and recalculated to reflect the six- (rather than the five-) point Likert scale.

The two procedures produced different mean scores; however, there did not seem to be a significantly greater distance between individual scores regardless of the

cluster analysis used. Fitzpatrick's (1988) recalculated means were used and Figure 1 illustrates the similarities of Fitzpatrick's (1988) couple distributions and those of this study.

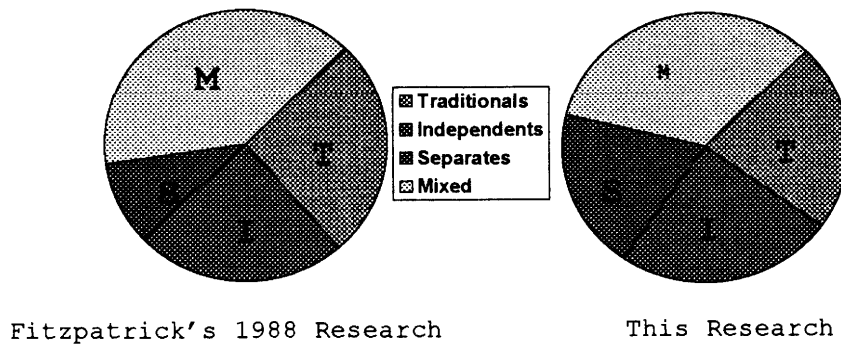


Figure 1. Similarities of couple distributions.

Table 1 illustrates the number of couples in this study represented in each of Fitzpatrick's (1988) pure couple types.

Table 1
RDI Marital Types

	Traditional Husbands	Independent Husbands	Separate Husbands	Total
Traditional Wives	27	6	5	38
Independent Wives	11	25	9	45
Separate Wives	6	4	10	20
Column Total	44	35	24	103.
	42.7	34.0	23.3	100.0

Next, the scores for the ROCI were calculated according to the directions provided by Rahim (1983). The values of the items marked for each scale were added to get a total score, which was then divided by the number of items responded to by the subject.

Although there was little problem determining the couple type, some difficulty arose regarding the conflict style. In several cases, an equal score in two categories resulted. This aspect of the ROCI instrument proved detrimental due to the inability of the instrument to adequately categorize subjects into one and only one conflict style. Babbie (1992) wrote that ". . . categories should be both exhaustive and mutually exclusive" (p. 381) and that every piece of information should fit into "one and only one category" (p. 381). Unfortunately, respondents frequently fell into more than one category--inevitably the Integrating category being one of the two or more. Social desirability would dictate that the questions be answered in ways that push respondents into the Integrating category. Also, the ROCI has more questions directed toward integrating than other styles, allowing respondents more possible opportunities to present themselves in a favorable light. Rahim (1983) reported that there is a "marginal but significant positive correlation between the social desirability and the integrating scale" (p. 20). In these instances, if

one of the styles was Integrating, the remaining category was chosen for the individual or the style receiving the same mean score as Integrating was selected. Couples whose scores were equally high in more than two conflict style categories were eliminated from the sample.

Frequencies revealed that a small number of respondents had not answered several questions relevant to determining their conflict style. A liberal criterion was adopted to insure adequate sample size on which to run analysis. Respondents must have answered at least two questions in each scale in order to determine their conflict style. In the instances where respondents failed to meet this criterion, the couple was excluded from the sample. In total, 13 couples were eliminated from the analysis as missing data cases. Figure 2 demonstrates the conflict style employed by the couples, using the criteria described above.

Finally, a cross-tabulation was run, examining marital type by conflict style. The high frequency of 0s and 1s evident in Table 2 would seem to indicate--that in general--the relationship between marital type and conflict style is not significant. However, in individual testing of the hypotheses of this research, relationships do appear.

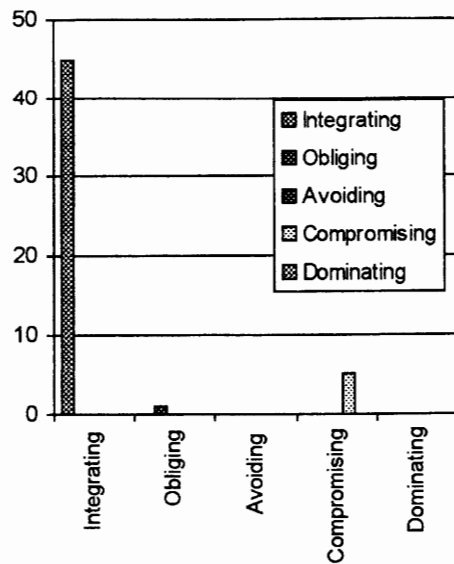


Figure 2. ROCI conflict styles.

Table 2

Marital Types and Conflict Styles

	Traditional Type	Independent Type	Separate Type	Mixed Type	Row Total
Integrating Style	11	16	1	17	45 43.7
Obliging Style	0	0	0	1	1 1.0
Compromising Style	0	1	1	3	5 4.9
Mixed Style	16	8	8	20	52 50.5
Column Total	27 26.2	25 24.3	10 9.7	41 39.8	103 100.0

NOTE: No Avoiding couples and no Dominating couples were represented in this population.

In addressing the separate hypotheses, each chi-square was run using a binary method for value assignment.

In other words, the specific marital type and conflict style under examination are assigned as "1" and all other categories are assigned "0." The hypotheses are posed to compare a particular marital type and conflict style against all others, rather than phrased to show averages scores on each style for all couple types. The analysis was executed in a fashion congruent with the phrasing of the specific inquiry. In addition, Bonferroni procedure was applied in order to decrease the reflection of Type I error in the findings. Testing of the hypothesis follows.

Conflict Styles Among Traditional Couple Types

Hypothesis 1: Traditional partners will exhibit a Compromising conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

The findings for the sample included in this research do not support the first hypothesis. Chi-square was run to determine whether the couples of the traditional marital type tended to exhibit a greater tendency toward compromise, $X^2(103,1) = 1.87$, ns. Table 3 indicates that none of the 27 couples who were traditional were also compromising. All couples having the Compromising conflict style were in a marital type other than Traditional.

Table 3
Occurrences of Compromising Style
Among Traditional Couples

	Other Conflict Styles	Compromising Style	Total
Other Marital Types	71 72.3	5 3.7	76 73.8
Traditional Marital Type	27 25.7	0 1.3	27 26.2
Column Total	98 95.1	5 4.9	103 100.0

Conflict Styles Among Independent
Couple Types

Hypothesis 2: Independent partners will exhibit an Integrating conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

The following chi-square using Bonferroni, shown in Table 4, reflects that second hypothesis is not supported, although of the 25 Independent couples, 16 had an Integrating conflict style. Independent couple type and Integrating conflict style are significantly associated, $X^2(103,1) = 5.54$, $p < .05$. However, after the Bonferroni correction for multiple hypotheses, the association is not significant. Although the Bonferroni method reduced the possibility of committing type I error, the power of detecting an effect if it existed is also decreased.

Table 4
Occurrences of Integrating Style
Among Independent Couples

	Other Conflict Styles	Integrating Style	Total
Other Couple Types	49 43.9	29 34.1	78 75.7
Independent Couples	9 14.1	16 10.9	25 24.3
Column Total	58 56.3	45 43.7	103 100.0

Conflict Styles Among Separate
Couple Types

Hypothesis 3: Separate partners will exhibit an Avoiding conflict style more frequently than other marital types.

This hypothesis could not be tested. In the total sample of 103 couples, there were none where both partners within the couple had an Avoiding conflict style. Sample homogeneity may contribute to this phenomenon.

Conflict Style Among Mixed
Couple Types

Hypothesis 4: Separate husbands in a Mixed couple type will exhibit a Dominating style more frequently than husbands of other marital types.

To determine what conflict style husbands of the Mixed couple type exhibit, the husbands of the Mixed type were examined separately from husbands of other couple types. A cross-tabulation was conducted to determine whether these Separate husbands did indeed exhibit a more Dominating style than husbands of the other marital types. The calculation presented in Table 5 shows that of the six Separate husbands in the Mixed marital type, two of the six (or 33%) have the Dominating style. Due to low cell frequencies, Fisher's Exact test was used to test the association between the husbands' marital type (Separate/non-Separate) and the husbands' conflict style (Dominating/non-Dominating). As hypothesized, the association was statistically significant (Fisher's Exact test, $p < .01$).

Table 5

Occurrences of Dominating Style
Among Separate Husbands

	Other Husbands	Separate Husbands	Total
Other Conflict Styles	96 94.2	4 5.8	100 97.1
Dominating Style	1 2.8	2 .2	3 2.9
Column Total	97 94.2	6 5.8	103 100.0

NOTE: Separate husbands are in the Mixed couple type.

Hypothesis 5: Traditional wives in a Mixed couple type will exhibit an Obliging conflict style more frequently than wives of other marital types.

The following cross-tabulations, Table 6, indicated that there is not an apparent relationship between an Obliging conflict style and the Traditional wives of the Mixed marital type. The wives of this type are no more obliging than non-Traditional wives, $X^2(103,1) = .465$, ns.

Table 6

Occurrences of Obliging Style
Among Traditional Wives

	Other Wives	Obliging Wives	Total
Other Marital Types	90 90.4	7 6.6	97 94.2
Traditional Wives	6 5.6	0 .4	6 5.8
Column Total	96 93.2	7 6.8	103 100.0

NOTE: Obliging wives are in Mixed couple type.

The issue of social desirability inherent in the ROCI, and inability of the ROCI to singularly categorize respondents produced few results in its application. As couples level data did not produce significant results, and the conflict scale showed little variance, additional analyses were performed in an attempt to uncover more information regarding scale validity, and any possible

relationships between variables not addressed in the original hypotheses.

Post Hoc Analysis

Due to low cell frequencies, conflict styles were divided conceptually into concern for other (Integrating, Compromising, Obliging) and concern for self (Dominating, Avoiding). Van de Vliert and Kabanoff (1990) provided a useful explanation of the association between the collaborating (Integrating) and Compromising, writing that although the two styles have behaviors that differ, "their respective outcomes--a settlement and a resolution--have some common features, and their final social-psychological consequences tend to be the same" (p. 206).

Results of reliability analysis indicate that Integrating, Obliging, and Compromise may be grouped together as the Other orientation scale ($\alpha = .59$ for wives, $.66$ for husbands). Results of the multivariate regression demonstrate that the overall pattern of the relationship is significantly different from random [$F(20,180) = 2.30, p < .01$]. Additionally, a univariate F-test shows that the relationship of marital type and conflict style, with Satisfaction as the dependent variable is marginally significant for wife's satisfaction [$F(10,90) = 1.85, p < .10$] but not for husbands' (therefore focus of this study shall be directed toward wives' satisfaction). Husbands' and wives' satisfaction

was treated as the dependent variable and regressed on the Integrating, Obliging, Avoiding, Compromising, and Dominating conflict styles. Wives' satisfaction is significantly related to the composite of all other variables. Husbands' Dominating conflict style and wives' Integrating style significantly contribute to wives' satisfaction (husbands' Dominating $t = .050$; wives' Integrating $t = .011$). Husbands' satisfaction produced no significant results when examined with other variables.

Figure 3 illustrates the association between marital type, Other orientation, and levels of wives' marital satisfaction. ANOVA was conducted with wives' satisfaction by marital type and the medial split of Other orientation. Main effects for marital type were significant [$F(109,2) = 10.216, p < .001$]. Effects for Other orientation were also significant [$F(109,1) = 8.96, p < .01$]. Interaction effects were not significant.

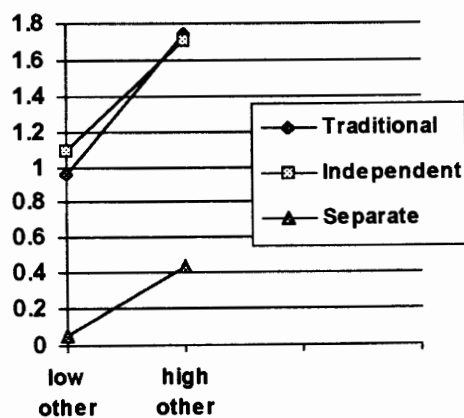


Figure 3. Wives' marital type, wives' other orientation, and wives' satisfaction.

Regardless of marital type, Other orientation positively affects satisfaction. Wives' marital type and wives' Other orientation contribute independently to wives' satisfaction.

These findings appear to provide support for the ROCI having some relationship to wives' satisfaction, but not to marital types as hypothesized.

In the following chapter, interpretation of data is discussed, as well as the study limitations and implications. Considerations for future research are also examined.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this study do not confirm a strong relationship between marital type and conflict style. Of the five hypotheses put forth for this research, only one is supported with data. Hypothesis three was untestable. An association between the Separate husbands of the Mixed marital type and a Dominating conflict style is indicated and statistically supported.

The data do not seem to support the first and fifth hypotheses that: *Traditional partners will exhibit a Compromising conflict style more frequently than other marital types* or that *Traditional wives in a Mixed couple type will exhibit an Obliging conflict style more frequently than wives of other marital types*. Results have not always been conclusive in prior research. Fitzpatrick (1987) reported that Traditionals believe in discussing conflict, they are also relatively nonassertive, and they believe in exercising "tactful restraint." However, Williamson and Fitzpatrick (1985) also reported that Traditionals change their pattern of interaction depending on the topic of discussion. Fitzpatrick (1983) asserted that Traditionals are

sensitive to their spouses when self-disclosing, and that these couples are fairly restrained in their communication--taking the other's feeling into account. Fitzpatrick (1983) further reported that Traditionals hold conventional views about appropriate male and female behavior and see themselves as demonstrating these traits in their interpersonal behavior. Traditionals have high cohesion, are satisfied with their marriages, and are the most adjusted of the couples. However, Fitzpatrick (1983) also emphasized that Traditionals rely on intense control moves during conflict conditions and increase their dominant acts, particularly non-supportive statements. As Traditionals move from a neutral topic to a conflict arousing one, Traditionals use more competitive statements and struggle for control when the issue is serious (Fitzpatrick, 1983). Although the hypothesis may have accurately posed a possible relationship between the Traditionals and a Compromising style during neutral discussion, it may not have served to address the intricacies of Traditionals during conflict. Reframing the questions regarding Traditional couples to focus specifically on conflict situations may provide the researcher with supportable hypotheses.

The second hypothesis, *Independent partners will exhibit an Integrating conflict style more frequently than other marital types* was also unsupported. The Bonferroni

procedure increases the probability of making Type II error by 80%. The sample itself may not make a good test of the hypothesis due to homogeneity.

The fourth hypothesis, *Separate husbands in a Mixed couple type will exhibit a Dominating style more frequently than husbands of other marital types* was statistically supported ($p < .01$).

Fitzpatrick (1983) reported that the Mixed couple type use extremely strong patterns of competitive symmetry. These couples tend to speak from their own points of view, are rigid in their interaction pattern, and end sequences of neutrality with a dominance move.

Implications

The majority of individuals in this sample possessed an integrating style, regardless of their marital type. The Traditional couples had high occurrences of an Integrating conflict style, although not as high as the Independent couples. Hocker and Wilmot (1991) wrote that "people most often see *themselves* as trying to solve the problem (using integrative style) [and] most often see the OTHER as using control or aggressive styles" (p. 126). This may be reflected in the findings of this study, which seems to provide a general self-reported description of a married couple that maintains high levels of companionship and sharing, attempt to stay psychologically close to

their spouses, places emphasis on individual autonomy and seems to practice an Integrating conflict style. However, it must be considered that couples may respond differently to questions about conflict than they actually respond during conflict depending on the context in which the conflict occurs, as well as the temperament or behavior of their partner. Williamson and Fitzpatrick (1985) found that couples report different levels of assertiveness and openness to conflict in their marriages, but that these couples also differ in this communication behavior during conflict. These researchers also found that behavior that is competing in one situation or context may not be perceived as competing in another situation or context and that individuals moderate their communication depending upon the topic of discussion and whether the conflict is large or small. Wilmot and Hocker (1991) wrote that individuals develop sequences of styles; one may begin a conflict by avoiding, move to collaborating, or even competing, etc. In short, finding meaning for a behavior may not be possible outside the social context in which it occurred.

Burggraf and Sillars (1987) reported that regardless of the marital types, there tended to be a reciprocity of the types of acts or statements offered by the spousal partner. For example, avoidance acts by one partner tended to be followed by avoidance from the other. This

pattern also followed for confrontive acts, as well as analytic acts and conciliatory acts. These previous findings would seem contradictory to couples in this study who, overall, possess a conflict style that involves the exchange of information, problem solving, and examination of differences to reach mutually acceptable solutions.

Regardless of how conflict styles are exhibited or perceived among this sample, the Other orientation appears to increase satisfaction regardless of marital type. The results of this study did not reveal a significant difference between men and women in concern for Self/Other orientation although women having the Other orientation reported greater marital satisfaction. Hecht (1978) discussed communication and satisfaction and wrote that "if positive expectations are fulfilled, satisfaction results" (p. 254). If there are differences in the expectations that partners hold within the relationship, varying levels of satisfaction may occur. In other words, the relationship between Other orientation and satisfaction may be a result of the stress experienced when there are differences in the ideological orientations of the couple or in the degree to which the partners agree or disagree on issues of autonomy and interdependence.

Traditional couples hold conventional values and sex-roles and place emphasis on stability and traditional community customs. This description would seem to

indicate that the ideological orientation of the partners is not in question. These couples also disclose in a way that takes the other's feelings into account (Fitzpatrick, 1983) and emphasizes we-ness over individual goals and values (Gottman, 1993). Because of the emphasis on we-ness and less emphasis on individuals goals, Traditional women may experience less need for autonomy, focusing instead on the interdependence with their spouse. Experiencing less tension surrounding this issue of autonomy/interdependence may contribute to a higher level of marital satisfaction.

Independents maintain high levels of companionship and sharing, attempt to stay psychologically close to their spouses, and place emphasis on individual autonomy. Independent couples have negotiated a balance between interdependence and autonomy in their relationship and are less socially restrained than other couple types, and openly express their feelings to their mates (Fitzpatrick & Best, 1979). Gottman (1993) wrote that Independents "believe that individuality should be emphasized and strengthened by the marriage" (p. 13). This ideological orientation may allow Independent couples to more openly disclose their feelings and thoughts to each other (Fitzpatrick, 1983). Because the Independent partners are more willing to express themselves in a close relationship and feel that independence is important to the success of

the relationship, there may be greater understanding and appreciation of the partners' independence needs. This increased understanding and concern for the other's independence needs may decrease the potential for conflict inherent in the juxtaposition of interdependence and autonomy. It follows that less conflict surrounding interdependence needs may contribute to marital satisfaction among the Independent women.

Fitzpatrick and Best (1979) wrote that Separates are the least likely to express their feelings to one another, yet Separates are still able to maintain agreement on issues related to dyadic functioning. Separates vacillate between a nonconventional/conventional ideology and express the need for autonomy and differentiated space (Burggraf & Sillars, 1987). In short, "Separates have left the issues of autonomy/interdependence essentially unresolved in their relationship" (Fitzpatrick & Best, 1979, p. 178). However, Fitzpatrick and Best also asserted that a shared value orientation--rather than aspects of affection and solidarity--seems to be the bond between partners of this couple type. Perhaps, as with the Traditionals, the shared ideological orientation reduces the potential for conflict in the relationship, thereby increasing the level of satisfaction within the Separate marriage.

In summary, individuals may see themselves as trying to solve problems, but perceive others as being uncooperative during conflict. People may also respond differently to questions about conflict than to an actual conflict and it seems that conflict styles may be both sequential and reciprocal. Regardless, having concern for one's partner appears to affect the level of satisfaction experienced in the relationship. Although the relationship between marital type and conflict style is not strongly supported with this research, an association between marital type, conflict style, and satisfaction seems to exist. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this study is the suggestion that the degree of one's concern for self and other may vary within the marital type and contribute to the overall satisfaction experienced by the partners.

Limitations

Several limitations exist regarding this research. A high percentage of the population was drawn from a sample homogenous in terms of education, age and number of years married. This homogeneity makes it difficult to adequately generalize the results--a problem which would not occur in a truly random sample. Also, one question pertaining to the Dominating conflict style was omitted from the survey. This omission was compensated for in the

scoring for this conflict style. Although the results indicate that there is an association between Separate husbands and a Dominating conflict style, slightly different results may occur with the inclusion of the additional Dominating question.

Some methodological issues must also be examined. First, the survey questionnaire limits the number of possible answers and does not provide an opportunity for respondents to get or give additional clarification or information. Also, as some respondents scored the same in more than one conflict style, it is likely that these individuals may use more than one style. Kabanoff (1987) argued that there are "no real, behavioral equivalents of these conflict styles that can be identified independently of the context in which they occur" (p. 162).

Several disadvantages existed regarding the collection method itself. Data collection via the PCC Electronic Mail System limited residential accessibility and was only used by persons working for the institution that had an interest in using electronic mail, and had applied for EMS accounts. Also, as the questionnaires were sent via mail services, There was some limitation in regards to availability of instrument clarification. Although a one-page instruction sheet was included on how to complete the survey, these directions may not have been as clear for some persons as others. Lastly, because

there was no researcher supervision available during the majority of questionnaire completion, it is unknown whether respondents compared answers with one another, despite the instruction not to. Although these are important research considerations, the advantages this medium provided in data collection far outweighed any disadvantages.

Future Research

Comparing results from other homogenous samples to this study, or comparing results from a random sample may also be useful in understanding more about the association between marital types and conflict styles. Qualitative methods of repeat interviewing both partners together and separately may be necessary to isolate recurrent conflict issues within the relationship. In addition, investigation of both the perceptions of each partner's own conflict style, as well as the perceptions of their spouse's conflict style may prove beneficial in future research regarding conflict styles and marital types. A longitudinal study of repeat interviewing, and witnessed interaction of a couple during a conflict, may be an effective method to determine what differences exist between partners' perceptions of conflict, recollection of conflict interactions, and actual conflict behaviors. As "most people may have difficulty discriminating between

intentions and behavior" (Kabanoff, 1987, p. 163), survey instruments may simply not be able to get to the core issues of conflict, conflict styles, or conflict resolution. Additional investigation into the role of concern for Self/Other orientation may prove the most valuable and interesting for learning more about marriages and relationships. Specifically, an examination of the interaction between marital type, conflict style and satisfaction of husbands should be examined to discover why a relationship exists between these variables for women, but seemingly not for men.

Sternberg and Dobson (1987) wrote, ". . . we often find ourselves in conflict with our peers, our superiors at work, our children, and practically everyone with whom we come into more than passing contact" (p. 794). Because of the omnipresence of conflict--both in the world in which we live and in our most personal relationships (our marriages)--conflict resolution styles would seem a subject worthy of more in-depth examination. Although a variety of instruments exist regarding conflict resolution styles, considerable room for improvement remains.

REFERENCES

- Acitelli, L. (1992, February). Gender differences in relationship awareness and marital satisfaction among young married couples. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(1), 102-110.
- Babbie, E. (1992). *The practice of social research* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Berger, P., & Kellner, H. (1964). Marriage and the construction of reality. *Diogenes*, 46, 1-24.
- Blake, R., & Mouton, J. (1969). *Building a dynamic corporation through grid organization development*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley Publishing Co. Inc.
- Burggraf, C. S., & Sillars, A. L. (1987, September). A critical examination of sex differences in marital communication. *Communication Monographs*, 54(3), 276-294.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1977). A typological approach to communication in relationships. In B. Rubin (Ed.), *Communication yearbook I* (pp. 263-275). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1983). Predicting couples' communication from couples' self-reports. In R. N. Bostrom & B. H. Westley (Eds.), *Communication yearbook 7* (pp. 49-82). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1987). Marital interaction. In C. R. Berger & S. H. Chaffee (Eds.), *Handbook of communication science* (pp. 564-618). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1988). *Between husbands & wives: Communication in marriage*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Best, P. (1979, August). Dyadic adjustment in relational types: Consensus, cohesion, affectional expression and satisfaction in enduring relationships. *Communication Monographs*, 46, 167-178.

- Fitzpatrick, M. A., & Ritchie, D. (1994, March). Communication schemata within the family: Multiple perspectives on family interaction. *Human Communication Research*, 20(3), 275-301.
- Frey, L., Botan, C., Friedman, P., & Kreps, G. (1992). *Interpreting communication research: A case study approach*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gottman, J. M., & Krokoff, L. J. (1989, February). Marital interaction and satisfaction: A longitudinal view. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57(1), 47-52.
- Gottman, J. M. (1993, February). The roles on conflict engagement, escalation, and avoidance in marital interaction: A longitudinal view of five types of couples. Special Section: Couples and couple therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61(1), 6-15.
- Hecht, M. L. (1978). The conceptualization and measurement of interpersonal communication satisfaction. *Human Communication Research*, 4(3), 253-264.
- Hocker J., & Wilmot, W. (1991). *Interpersonal Conflict* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown.
- Kabanoff, B. (1987). Predictive validity of the MODE conflict instrument. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 72(1), 160-163.
- Kantor, D., & Lehr, W. (1975). *Inside the family*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Katori, K. (1990, April/May). Recent developments and future trends in marketing research in Japan using new electronic media. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 30(2), 53-57.
- Killman, R., & Thomas, K. (1975). Interpersonal conflict-handling behavior as reflections of jungian personality dimensions. *Psychological Reports*, 37, 971-980.
- National Demographics and Lifestyles. (1995). *Lifestyle market analyst*. Des Plaines, IL: SRDS, L.P.
- Noller, P., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (Eds.). (1988). *Perspectives on marital interaction*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

- Rahim, M. A. (1983). *Rahim organizational conflict Inventory-II: Forms A, B, C*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychological Press.
- Schaap, C., Buunk, B., & Kerstra, A. (1988). Marital conflict resolution. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), *Perspectives on marital interaction* (pp. 203-244). Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- SPSS. (1993). *SPSS for windows* [Computer program]. Chicago: Author.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Dobson, D. M. (1987). Resolving interpersonal conflicts: An analysis of stylistic consistency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52, 794-812.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Soriano, L. J. (1984). Styles of conflict resolution. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 115-126.
- Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1978). Comparison of four instruments measuring conflict behavior. *Psychological Reports*, 42, 1139-1145.
- Utley, M., Richardson, D., & Pilkington, C. (1989). Personality and interpersonal conflict management. *Personal and Individual Differences*, 10(3), 287-293.
- Van de Vliert, E., & Kabanoff, B. (1990). Toward theory-based measures of conflict management. *Academy of Management Journal*, 33(1), 199-209.
- VanLear, A. C. (1990). Communication and marital satisfaction: Social desirability and nonlinearity. *Communication Research Reports*, 7(1), 38-44.
- Williamson, R., & Fitzpatrick, M. (1985). Two approaches to marital interaction: Relational control patterns in marital types. *Communication Monographs*, 52, 236-252.
- Witteman, H., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1986). Compliance-gaining in marital interaction: Power bases, processes, and outcomes. *Communication Monographs*, 53, 130-143.

APPENDIX A

FITZPATRICK'S RELATIONAL DIMENSION
INVENTORY (MODIFIED)

The following questions were taken from Fitzpatrick's original 77 questions Relational Dimensions Inventory.

This shortened version takes the highest loaded items from the original RDI and includes six questions each for measuring uncertainty, conflict, traditionalism, and sharing.

Likert scale was changed from a seven-point to a six-point scale.

UNCERTAINTY

Relationships should not interfere with each person's pursuit to discover his/her potential.

In a relationship, each individual should be permitted to establish the daily rhythm and time schedule that suits him or her best.

Often the only way to gain perspective on a situation is to see its absurdity.

The ideal relationship is one marked by novelty, humor and spontaneity.

In a close relationship, there should be no constraints or restrictions on individual freedom.

Life is filled with so many contradictions that I am not certain how to interpret what it all means.

CONFLICT

Some issues will disappear if two people can just avoid arguing about them.

We express anger with one another.

Spouse/partners should be frank and spontaneous in conversations with one another, even if it leads to disagreements.

*It is better to hide one's true feelings in order to avoid hurting one's partner.

*In a close relationship it is better to avoid conflicts than to engage in them.

It is important to share good feelings with each other than it so share bad feelings.

TRADITIONALISM

Once family plans are made, they should not be changed without a very good reason.

A woman should take her husband's last name when she marries.

My wedding ceremony was (or will be) very important to me.

Our society, as we see it, needs to regain faith in law and our institutions.

It is important for a family to attend church or synagogue and, when possible, attend together.

The meaning of life and our purpose in it is very clear to us.

SHARING

My spouse/partner and I (will) often tell each other how much we love or care about each other.

My spouse/partner and I (will) joke around and have more fun than most couples.

Our life together is more exciting than most couples.

We cooperate well in resolving conflicts.

My spouse/partner (will) reassures and comforts me when I am feeling low.

We try to resolve our disagreements immediately.

*THESE QUESTIONS WERE REVERSE CODED FOR ANALYSIS

APPENDIX B

RAHIM'S ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT
INVENTORY II (MODIFIED)

The following questions were taken from the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II. Questions were modified to read "spouse/partner" rather than "peer," "boss," or "subordinate."

Likert scale was adjusted from a five-point to a six-point scale.

INTEGRATING

I try to investigate an issue with my spouse/partner to find a solution acceptable to us.

I try to integrate my ideas with those of my spouse/partner to come up with a decision jointly.

I try to work with my spouse to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations.

I exchange accurate information with my spouse/partner to solve a problem together.

I try to bring all our concern out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.

I collaborate with my spouse/partner to come up with decisions acceptable to us.

I try to work with my spouse/partner for a proper understanding of a problem.

OBLIGING

I generally try to satisfy the needs of my spouse/partner.

I usually accommodate the wishes of my spouse/partner.

I give in to the wishes of my spouse/partner.

I usually allow concessions to my spouse/partner.

I often go along with the suggestions of my spouse/partner.

I try to satisfy the exceptions of my spouse/partner.

AVOIDING

I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep conflicts with my spouse/partner to myself.

I usually avoid open discussions of my differences with my partner/spouse.

I avoid an encounter with my spouse/partner.

I try to keep my disagreements with my spouse/partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.

I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my spouse/partner.

I try to stay away from disagreement with my spouse/partner.

COMPROMISING

I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.

I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.

I negotiate with my spouse/partner so that a compromise can be reached.

I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.

DOMINATING

I use my influence with my spouse/partner to get my ideas accepted.

I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.

I sometimes use my power to win in a competitive situation.

I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.

*I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue.
(this question was omitted from the survey)

APPENDIX C

SATISFACTION QUESTIONS

I am entirely satisfied with my spouse/partner.

I am not entirely satisfied with my spouse/partner.

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORMS

Consent for Study Participation

(please print clearly)

agree to take part in this research project about relationships and/or marriage. This research is being conducted by Lynn Stanek, under the supervision of Dr. David Ritchie, and the information collected from me will be used as data for her master's thesis in Speech Communication at Portland State University.

I understand that the study makes a request for demographic information and also involves completion of a survey questionnaire. These questions ask for responses regarding my feelings about relationships and/or marriage, and also asks me to identify disagreements or differences that exist within my relationship/marriage. These questions are not anticipated to be embarrassing to me, or to cause me undue stress.

Lynn has told me that the purpose of the study is to learn more about conflict in marriage. There are no potential risks associated with my participation in this study. The questionnaires will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

I may not receive any direct benefit from taking part in this study, but the study may help to increase knowledge that may help others in the future.

Lynn Stanek has offered to answer any question I have about the study and what I am expected to do. She has promised that all information I give will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and that the names of all people in the study will be kept confidential. In addition, consent forms and questionnaires will be separated immediately and no identifying information will be kept regarding my responses.

I understand that I do not have to take part in this study, and that this will not affect my relationship with Portland State University or any institution facilitating the collection of this data.

I have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. I may withdraw my participation at any time or skip any questions that I do not want to answer.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please contact Dr. David Ritchie at 235-7191; or the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Research and Sponsored Projects Office, 725-3417.

APPENDIX E

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

COUPLE ID #

Portland State University
Marital Types and Conflict Styles Research

Page 1

Sex Male Female

Age 16-25 26-35 36-45 46-55 55-65 over 65

About how many miles do you live from the community in which you grew up (the community you think of as your "childhood home")?

Within 5 miles 6-25 miles 26-50 miles 51-100 miles Over 100 miles

How many years have lived in your present community? 1-3 4-6 7-10 11 or more

How many years of formal education do you have AFTER high school?
 1 2 3 4 5-6 7 or more

Which describes your racial or ethnic identity? Caucasian African-American Native American

Asian-American Hispanic Other

Which describes your religious affiliation?

Roman Catholic Protestant Jewish

Other Christian Other no religious affiliation

How many years have you been married or going together?

Less than 1 year 1-4 5-10 11-15

16-20 21-25 26-30 over 30 years

How often do you take vacations and do things on weekends together with relatives or family friends?

Very frequently Occasionally Rarely Never

How many of your children's friends' parents do you know?

All Almost all Some A few None

How many friends do you have, as a family, whom you have known longer than 10 years?

Several A few One or two None

Do not mark outside this line

Not Important At All

Not Too Important

Fairly Important

Very Important

Extremely Important

Portland State University
Marital Types and Conflict Styles Research

Page 2

The following is a list of words and phrases, representing values that guide people's lives. Some of these have to do with everyday life; others have to do with public policy and citizenship. Please rate how important each value is to you, again rating them extremely important, very important, fairly important, not too important, or not important at all.

- A comfortable life (a prosperous life).
- An exciting life (a stimulating, active life).
- A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution).
- A world at peace (free of war and conflict).
- A world of beauty (beauty of nature and the arts).
- Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all).
- Family security (taking care of loved ones).
- Freedom (independence, free choice).
- Happiness (contentedness).
- Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict).
- Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy).
- National security (protection from attack).
- Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life).
- Religious or mystical experience (being at one with God or the universe).
- Self-respect (self-esteem).
- Social recognition (respect, admiration).
- True friendship (close companionship).
- Wisdom (a mature understanding of life).
- Ambitious (hard-working, aspiring).
- Broadminded (open-minded).
- Capable (competent, effective).
- Cheerful (light-hearted, joyful).
- Clean (neat, tidy).
- Courageous (standing up for your beliefs).
- Forgiving (willing to pardon others).
- Helpful (working for the welfare of others).
- Honest (sincere, truthful).
- Imaginative (daring, creative).
- Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient).
- Intellectual (intelligent, reflective).
- Logical (consistent, rational).
- Loving (affectionate, tender).
- Obedient (dutiful, respectful).
- Polite (courteous, well-mannered).
- Responsible (dependable, reliable).
- Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined).

Do not mark outside this line

Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Somewhat Agree
 Somewhat Disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Portland State University
 Marital Types and Conflict Styles Research

Page 3

The following statements are concerned with how you feel about marriage or your primary relationship. If you agree with the statement or it describes your relationship and/or marriage, answer "Strongly agree", "Agree", or "Somewhat Agree". If you disagree or it does not describe your relationship, answer "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", or "Somewhat Disagree." Mark in #2 pencil the response that best reflects your feelings regarding your relationship with your spouse/partner.

- Relationships should not interfere with each person's pursuit to discover his/her potential.
- Some issues will disappear if two people can just avoid arguing about them.
- Once family plans are made, they should not be changed without a very good reason.
- My spouse/partner and I (will) often tell each other how much we care about each other.
- We express anger with one another.
- In a relationship, each individual should be permitted to establish the daily rhythm and time schedule that suits him or her best.
- Spouse/partners should be frank and spontaneous in conversations with one another, even if it leads to disagreements.
- My spouse/partner and I (will) joke around and have more fun than most couples.
- It is better to hide one's true feelings in order to avoid hurting one's partner.
- Often the only way to gain perspective on a situation is to see its absurdity.
- Our life together is more exciting than most couples.
- In a close relationship it is better to avoid conflicts than to engage in them.
- I am not entirely satisfied with my spouse.
- The ideal relationship is one marked by novelty, humor and spontaneity.
- We cooperate well in resolving conflicts.
- A woman should take her husband's last name when she marries.
- It is more important to share good feelings with each other than it is to share bad feelings.
- My wedding ceremony was (or will be) very important to me.
- My spouse/partner (will) reassures and comforts me when I am feeling low.
- Our society, as we see it, needs to regain faith in law and our institutions.
- We try to resolve our disagreements immediately.
- It is important for a family to attend church or synagogue and, when possible, attend together.
- In a close relationship there should be no constraints or restrictions on individual freedom.
- The meaning of life and our purpose in it is very clear to us.
- Life is filled with so many contradictions that I am not certain how to interpret what it all means.

Do not mark outside this line

Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Somewhat Agree
 Somewhat Disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree

Portland State University
 Marital Types and Conflict Styles Research

Page 4

There are inconsistencies, disagreements, or differences that arise in relationships. RANK each of the following statements to indicate how much disagreement or difference exists between you and your spouse/partner. Answer each question as it relates to the communication you have with your spouse/partner, NOT how you talk about your relationship with others.

- I try to investigate an issue with my spouse/partner to find a solution acceptable to us.
- I generally try to satisfy the needs of my spouse/partner.
- I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep conflicts with my spouse/partner to myself.
- I try to integrate my ideas with those of my spouse to come up with a decision jointly.
- I try to work with my spouse to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations.
- I usually avoid open discussions of my differences with my spouse/partner.
- I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse
- I use my influence with my spouse/partner to get my ideas accepted.
- I am entirely satisfied with my spouse/partner.
- I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.
- I usually accomodate the wishes of my spouse/partner.
- I give in to the wishes of my spouse/partner.
- I exchange accurate information with my spouse/partner to solve a problem together.
- I usually allow concessions to my spouse/partner.
- I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
- I negotiate with my spouse/partner so that a compromise can be reached.
- I try to stay away from disagreement with my spouse/partner.
- I avoid an encounter with my spouse/partner.
- I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.
- I often go along with the suggestions of my spouse/partner.
- I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.
- I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.
- I collaborate with my spouse/partner to come up with decisions acceptable to us.
- I try to satisfy the expectations of my spouse/partner.
- I sometimes use my power to win in a competitive situation.
- I try to keep my disagreements with my spouse/partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
- I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my spouse/partner.
- I try to work with my spouse/partner for a proper understanding of a problem.

In completing this questionnaire, were there any questions that you found problematic or difficult to answer? If so, please include on the back of this form the question and the nature of the difficulty.

APPENDIX F

**E-MAIL REQUEST FOR RESEARCH
PARTICIPANTS**

Received: 04-12-95 16:36
From: lstanek.DOMAIN1
To: mail-users
Subject: graduate research
Cc: lstanek

Sent: 04-12-95 16:35

HELP!!!!!!

I am desperate. I am trying to complete my graduate work at PSU in Speech Communication. My study focuses on couples research. If you are married, living together, or consider yourself in a significant relationship, this message is for you.

I am still in need of 40 couples to complete my survey questionnaire. This survey deals with couples' ideas about relationships and negotiation. The questionnaire is a fill-in-the-bubbles format and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Both parties in the relationship complete a survey independently of their partner, all respondents and responses are kept confidential, and findings will only be reported in the aggregate.

If you can assist in this research, please send an E-mail reply with your office location, and I will deliver a survey to your college address. Completed surveys can be returned to me at Syl CT B5b.

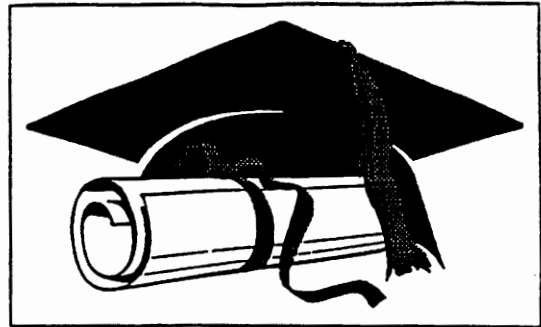
<< E N D O F M E S S A G E >>

APPENDIX G

INSTRUCTION SHEET

To Whom:

Thank you in advance for assisting with my graduate research.

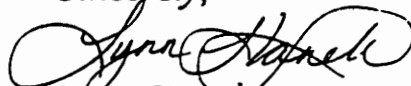


Please take your time in filling out the enclosed surveys. Many of the questions may be found to be interesting topics for discussion among respondents. However, I do ask that you complete the survey independently of your partner. Completing the survey together may alter the data and consequently affect the research findings in an adverse fashion. Discussion of the survey questions is acceptable and encouraged after the completion and mailing of the questionnaire.

Also, if you know of other couples who would be interested in participating in this research, please pass along my name and number-- Lynn Stanek - 235-4204. (Participation out of pity, for the plight of a graduate student, is also welcome.)

Thanks again for your help and cooperation.

Sincerely,


Lynn Stanek