

ABSTRACT

The Negotiation of Conflict Management in Long-Distance and Geographically Close Romantic Relationships

Whitney J. Reys, M.A.

Thesis Chairperson: Mark T. Morman Ph.D.

This study examines conflict management strategy use in long-distance dating relationships (LDDRs) compared to conflict management strategy use in geographically close dating relationships (GCDRs). Uncertainty Reduction Theory posits that uncertainty could be problematic for LDDRs and thus contribute to differences in conflict management styles. This study applied the conceptualization of Peterson's (1983) conflict management strategies to the context of dating relationships. The purpose of this study was to determine differences between conflict management in LDDRs and GCDRs. This study also sought to measure the satisfaction, commitment, and closeness felt by individuals who used each conflict management strategy. Results indicated no significant differences exist between conflict management use among LDDRs and GCDRs. These results invite future exploration on the topic of LDDR conflict management.

The Negotiation of Conflict Management in Long-Distance
and Geographically Close Romantic Relationships

by

Whitney Reys, B.A.

A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Communication Studies

David W. Schlueter, Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

Approved by the Thesis Committee

Mark T. Morman, Ph.D., Chairperson

David W. Schlueter, Ph.D.

Sara J. Stone, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
May 2011

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Copyright © 2011 by Whitney Reys

All rights reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	
Acknowledgments	
Dedication	
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Challenges of LDDRs	5
Relational Uncertainty	6
Relational Uncertainty and Conflict Management	10
2. Method	
Participants	21
Measurement	22
Procedures	24
3. Results	25
4. Discussion	30
Conflict Management Strategy Use in LDDRs vs. GCDRs	30
Conflict Management Strategy Use and Satisfaction, Commitment, and Closeness	40
Limitations	41
Future Research	43
5. Conclusion	44
Appendix	45
References	68

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Conflict Management Strategies by Sex	26
2. Significant Differences in Conflict Management Strategy Use by Sex	27
3. Conflict Management Strategy and Relational Quality Correlations	28
4. Mean and Standard Deviation of Relational Quality Indicators by Sex and Distance	29

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to acknowledge Dr. Mark T. Morman for his helpful direction throughout this thesis writing process. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. David Schlueter and Dr. Sara Stone for serving on my thesis committee. I would also like to say thank you to everyone who participated in my study. Lastly, I would also like to thank Baylor University for their support throughout my time here in graduate school.

DEDICATION

To my family for their encouragement and support
throughout this thesis writing process.

And, to Dr. Mark Morman, Dr. David Schlueter, and Dr. Sara Stone for their
willingness to become a member of my thesis committee.

I am excited to see what the future brings and am thankful for the experiences
I have had at Baylor the last two years

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Geographic separation is an important yet understudied aspect of relational life. Advancements in communication technologies have contributed to the facilitation of geographic separation that is often brought on by situations such as college choice, job relocation, military deployments, and migration (Merolla, 2010). Research suggests that as many as 3.5 million Americans annually report being in a long-distance dating relationship (LDDR). LDDRs are particularly prevalent among college students. Nationally, between 25% and 50% of college students report being in an LDDR (Stafford, 2010). Approximately 10% of all job relocations in the United States result in the creation of LDDRs, and 52% of employers expect this number to increase (Armour, 1998). What has been termed “commuter marriages” are on the rise and after 9 years of war, geographic separation continues to be significant for military families as well (Merolla, 2010).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation (2003), U.S. workers take more than 400 million long-distance business trips (over 50 miles) per year (Merolla, 2010). For some groups such as flight attendants, professional athletes, media personnel, and businessmen, geographic separation for short or long periods of time is part of their daily lives. These statistics represent the increase in physical distance that romantic couples are encountering; whether

separation is temporary such as for a business trip, or long-term for a LDDR, managing relationships at a distance has become part of the everyday lives of many Americans. This rise in LDDRs has been, in part, attributed to the continual advancement of travel and communication technologies, which facilitate geographically dispersed and highly mobile social networks that are still highly connected through technology (Larsen, Urry & Axhausen, 2006).

Interpersonal relationships are among the highest areas of concern for college students (Paul, Poole & Jakubowyc, 1998). Moreover, the success or failure of students' romantic relationships is a strong predictor of life satisfaction and mental health (Vera & Betz, 1992). Likewise, romantic relationships have been linked to improvements in physical, emotional, mental, and financial well-being among adults (American Academy of Family Physicians, 2009). Given the influence of romantic relationships on our everyday lives, understanding the extent to which geographic separation affects relationships becomes very important.

The sheer volume and recent increase in LDDRs encourages further interest and examination of these types of relationships. Likewise, the unique characteristics and challenges of long-distance relationships relative to geographically close dating relationships (GCDRs) present new areas of potential research for interpersonal scholars. Lastly, the importance of interpersonal relationships in everyday life and the affect these relationships have on individual wellbeing further substantiates increased attention.

In order to further understand the impact of distance to relational wellbeing, it is imperative to first define LDDRs. There are two important aspects to the definition of LDDRs including 1) physical distance and 2) amount of time spent apart (Guldner & Swensen, 1995); therefore, for the purposes of the current study, a LDDR is defined as “a romantic relationship in which it is difficult or impossible for romantic partners to physically see each other in person, on a frequent basis,” (Dellman-Jenkins, Bernard-Paolucci, & Rushing, 1994). Likewise, this study defines a GCDR as a relationship in which partners live near one another (or together) and therefore have the opportunity to see one another face-to-face on a regular, if not daily, basis.

While there has been a steady increase in the number of LDDRs, literature pertaining to these types of relationships has been divergent. Reflecting the differences in the cultural aphorisms, “absence makes the heart grow fonder” and “out of sight out of mind,” current research on LDDRs continues to be divided concerning the success and satisfaction of LDDRs as compared to GCDRs. While Van Horn et al. (1997) found participants in GCDRs were more satisfied in their relationships than those in LDDRs, others have reported that individuals in LDDRs were more in love and had higher-quality communication than those in GCDRs (Stafford & Merolla, 2007). Moreover, Guldner and Swensen (1995) found no significant differences between LDDRs and GCDRs in terms of time spent together and relational satisfaction.

Not only is current research inconsistent in its findings of relational quality and satisfaction, it is also incomplete. While there has been research

regarding relational satisfaction (Sahlstein, 2006), relational maintenance (Merolla, 2010), coping methods (Maguire & Kinney, 2010), media use (Dainton & Aylor, 2002), and reunions (Stafford & Merolla, 2007) in LDDRs, the topic of conflict management in LDDRs has yet to be explored.

While conflict management is difficult in any situation, it can be particularly complex in LDDRs due to the lack of face-to-face communication these couples experience. Couples in LDDRs are forced to negotiate conflict over the phone or in writing, since meeting face-to-face is not a viable option. This lack of face-to-face communication presents many challenges for LDDR couples when attempting to resolve conflict. This study will assess strategies that partners in LDDRs use in negotiating conflict as well as implications for overall relational quality. Berger's Uncertainty Reduction Theory (1987) will be used to analyze patterns of conflict in LDDRs. Finally, Peterson's (1983) conflict model will be used to measure conflict types in this study and researcher's predictions. Using both Berger and Peterson, the goal of the current project is to assess how conflict is negotiated in LDDRs as compared to in GCDRs. After a brief lit review, the study's methods, results, and conclusions will be presented.

Challenges of LDDRs

Physically being away from a romantic partner is the defining quality of an LDDR. Research has concluded that separation itself is a primary source of relational difficulty in LDDRs (Maguire & Kinney, 2010). Not only does separation cause stress, but planning face-to-face visits, negotiating communication opportunities, budgeting for travel expenses and phone bills

often leads to anxiety as well. Face-to-face visits are vital to maintaining satisfying LDDRs but negotiating and planning visits are often a source of conflict in LDDRs.

Arranging visits is vital for romantic relationships due to the fact that face-to-face communication is the most effective channel for satisfaction of interpersonal needs (Westmyer, Diciocco, & Rubin, 1998). When engaging in face-to-face communication, both individuals have the ability to recognize non-verbal cues which make up 93% of communication and are much more difficult to distinguish in a long-distance context (Barbour, 1976). Thus, one benefit of face-to-face interaction is the ability to recognize nonverbal cues; the inability to pick up nonverbal cues may lead to less mutual understanding which could ultimately lead to conflict within the couple. Thus, the clearest difference between LDDRs and GCDRs is the frequency and ease with which couples can interact face-to-face (Stafford, 2010).

Furthermore, research has revealed that partners in LDDRs have less overall communication than partners in GCDRs (Stafford, 2010). A crucial consequence of less face-to-face communication (and overall communication) is less mutual dependence. Mutual dependence refers to the degree to which partners influence one another's fate and enactment of preferred behavior (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). A decreased amount of mutual dependence means decreased reliance on one another and that often leads LDDR partners to question their relational quality and longevity (Stafford, 2010). When LDDR partners begin to question their relationship, commitment, closeness, and

overall relational satisfaction may begin to decrease. The resulting unhappiness with the relationship may increase conflict. Likewise, less mutual dependence might lead individuals in LDDRs to see their relationships as less necessary, and thus become more careless with their partners feelings, and may potentially lead to episodes of destructive conflict.

Relational Uncertainty

Another challenge of maintaining a LDDR is uncertainty. A major assumption of Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) (Berger, 1987) is that there is a human drive to reduce uncertainty about self and others in initial interactions. URT posits that initial interactions between strangers are laden with uncertainty. Uncertainty refers to an individual's subjective sense of the number of alternative predictions available when thinking about a partner's future behavior (Berger, 1987). A greater number of perceived alternatives should produce a greater sense of uncertainty and a stronger drive to reduce this uncertainty. Moreover, URT assumes uncertainty is an unpleasant state and is therefore motivational; people are motivated to reduce the uncertainty they feel by seeking information about one another. Uncertainty is thus reduced as levels of self-disclosure and similarity increase.

Applying Uncertainty Reduction Theory to long-distance relationships, URT claims that partners in romantic relationships must manage their uncertainty by constantly updating one another with knowledge of their partner and of their relationship. Knobloch and Soloman (1999) asserted that there are two potential sources for relational uncertainty; extrinsic factors, such as

physical distance, and intrinsic factors, such as unequal levels of commitment between partners. Emmers and Canary (1996) found that physical distance was an uncertainty-inducing event in itself. Likewise, Dainton and Aylor (2001) found couples that had more face-to-face contact were less uncertain and expressed more trust in their partners than individuals who had no face-to-face contact. Therefore, it appears face-to-face contact tends to decrease uncertainty. Together, these studies suggest that although uncertainty is likely to occur in all established relationships, it may be even *more* likely in LDDRs. Berger and Bradac echoed this sentiment, arguing “Nowhere is the necessity for uncertainty reduction in ongoing relationships more apparent than in situations where relational partners spend considerable amounts of time away from each other” (1982, p.13).

Partners cannot easily dismiss the uncertainties that arise from infrequent face-to-face interactions. More specifically, individual’s experience uncertainty regarding their partner’s communication skills, goals, plans, emotional states, and beliefs (Berger, 1995). Relational uncertainty stems from three sources of ambiguity in relationships (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999): (a) self uncertainty refers to doubts about ones own involvement in the relationship, (b) partner uncertainty refers to doubts one has about their partner’s involvement in the relationship; and (c) relationship uncertainty refers to doubts about the viability of the relationship in general. Brought upon by constant separation and lack of face-to-face communication, high levels of uncertainty are related to low

levels of relational satisfaction, liking, and commitment within the LDDR (Maguire, 2007).

From an uncertainty reduction perspective, the inability to predict relational outcomes can lead to tense, conflict-ridden interactions between partners (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Although these researchers acknowledge that complete certainty is unlikely and is not even ideal, the underlying assumption is that decreases in uncertainty correspond with increases in intimacy. Thus, uncertainty often creates a negative state that people are motivated to resolve or eliminate, especially if a relationship with the other is seen as highly rewarding (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

Conditions of uncertainty limit the knowledge necessary to establish intimacy, ultimately acting as a barrier between partners. Knobloch and Solomon (2005) found that experiencing relational uncertainty makes it difficult to derive inferences about a partner because one lacks the knowledge necessary to interpret relational cues. Not only has heightened uncertainty been shown to diminish intimacy (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), it also corresponds to reduced attraction, decreased liking (Kellerman & Reynolds, 1990), heightened cognitive and emotional jealousy (Afifi & Reichert, 1996), appraisals of irritations as more severe and relationally threatening (Solomon & Knobloch, 2004), increased negative emotions (Planalp & Honeycut, 1985), and negative cognitive and emotional reactions to sexual intimacy (Theiss, 2005). As a whole, these studies highlight the ways in which uncertainty, or the lack of knowledge it creates, can

be detrimental to romantic relationships by leading to the potential for increased conflict.

Physical distance has been shown to be a significant contributor to relational uncertainty because distance leaves individuals unable to identify appropriate courses of action and confused about the meanings of relational cues (Knobloch & Solomon, 1999). Furthermore, high levels of uncertainty have been linked to low levels of intimacy, attraction, liking, as well as heightened jealousy and increased negative emotions. Together, these outcomes of high uncertainty lead to low levels of relational satisfaction that potentially become a primary source of conflict in relationships. This suggests there should be differences in the relational uncertainty of those in LDDRs versus GCDRs because theoretically GCDR couples don't have to deal with Uncertainty Reduction Theory due to their proximity.

Relational Uncertainty and Conflict Management

One likely outcome of unresolved uncertainty is relational conflict mainly because relational uncertainty strongly influences conflict-oriented communicative behavior. For example, previous research has revealed that individuals with high relational uncertainty withhold more topics from their partner (Knobloch & Carpenter-Theune, 2004) and tend to be more indirect when addressing relationship problems (Theiss & Solomon, 2006a). Furthermore, dating partners who are experiencing relational uncertainty engage in more topic avoidance (Knobloch, Satterlee, DiDomenico, 2010) and

hesitate to confront one another about sensitive issues, such as jealousy (Theiss & Solomon, 2006a) and irritations (Theiss & Solomon, 2006b).

Contrary to contemporary belief, the presence of conflict in a given relationship appears to be less important to relational functioning than management of the conflict (Gottman, 1994). Thus, how couples handle conflict appears to be more consequential to the success of the relationship than what they argue about or how frequently they encounter conflict.

Since the way in which conflict is resolved appears consequential to the future of the relationship, this study chose to focus on *how* couples in romantic relationships resolve conflict. More specifically, the goal of this study is to identify the conflict management strategies partners in LDDRs and GCDRs use to resolve conflict. This study will look at two types of romantic relationships: LDDR couples who manage conflict from a distance, and GCDR couples who manage conflict face-to-face and will seek to compare the use of conflict management strategies across LDDR and GCDR groups.

Several taxonomies and classification schemes exist that assess various aspects of couple conflict; however no research concerning conflict management strategies directly related to LDDRs were found. Among the most studied topics in the area of conflict management in romantic relationships are serial arguments, relational maintenance, jealousy, channel use, coping, forgiveness, commitment, and satisfaction. The conflict measure most commonly used by interpersonal researchers is Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy and Sugarman's

(1996) *Revised Conflict Tactics Scale* that focuses on abusive relationships, physical assault, and sexual coercion.

While there have been no assessments of conflict management in LDDRs, there has been research on the topic of general conflict management in interpersonal relationships. Peterson (1983) identified five conflict management strategies that he used to describe conflict negotiation in interpersonal relationships: separation, domination, compromise, integrative agreement, and structural improvement. Peterson (1983) stresses the interdependence of individuals in romantic relationships as a strong contributor to conflict. As previously mentioned, couples in LDDRs experience less interdependence and less mutual understanding due to increased uncertainty brought on by lack of face-to-face meetings. The influence each person exerts on the other is powerful; they “mean” a great deal to each other, because each person is vitally affected by the other. He continues, “Close relationships are always marked by strong emotional investment, interdependence, and experiences of intense affect (p. 377).” Thus, Peterson’s model fits well within this study because it has been used to describe conflict management in interpersonal relationships and it also addresses issues brought upon by uncertainty such as interdependence.

Peterson’s first strategy, *separation*, describes a period of “cooling off” and returning to the conflict at a later point in time. According to Peterson (1983), under some conditions, separation may be a useful step in attaining later resolution. If two individuals are not making any progress in a dispute, they may

realize that time apart will allow them a chance to arrive at more creative solutions to their conflict. The “cooling off” process serves dual purposes. First, “cooling off” allows individuals the time and space to calm down and gain perspective on the conflict at hand. Second, “cooling” off” allows individuals to separate themselves from the issue, thus reducing the uncertainty that emotion and conflict have caused.

Creating time and space to think, to rationalize, and to identify the next step is an attempt to reduce uncertainty in order to negotiate the conflict. The time alone gives individuals a chance to reconsider their views of the situation, and possibly to think of better ways of dealing with it. Withdrawal itself offers no solution to the conflict, but it provides an opportunity for individuals to take a step back and to calm ones emotions before returning to the conversation.

Couples in GCDRs who are physically together, and who may even live together, may have a harder time physically walking away from the conflict. Individuals in GCDRs have more mutual dependence (Stafford, 2010), which may make it hard to function without ones significant other for very long. Also, if a couple lives together individuals may not have anywhere else to go when a conflict arises. Due to the fact that couples engaged in LDDRs are already physically separate, this study hypothesizes that individuals in LDDRs will use more separation strategies than individuals in GCDRs. Most couples in LDDRs rely on telephone communication (Dainton & Aylor, 2002), thus when a conflict is occurring it is easier for individuals in LDDRs to hang up the phone and return to the conversation later. Therefore, the current study predicts that:

H1: Partners in LDDRs will use more separation strategies than partners in GCDRs.

Second, *domination* is an attempt to persuade or coerce the other into choosing the dominator's side of the issue, ending in conquest. One person continues to pursue the line of action leading to personal goals; the other gives way (Peterson, 1983). The most obvious determinant of the outcome of domination is power differential. Contributors to power such as control of resources and access to alternative relationships characterize the "winner" of the conflict, while few resources and few alternatives characterize the "loser" (Peterson, 1983). Thus, one partner essentially ignores the others' wishes in order to gain victory, and fails to take advantage of the opportunities conflict can offer for constructive change.

Domination seeks to reduce uncertainty by creating a situation where there is only one option. When one individual exercises domination over a situation they are simplifying the issue, presenting only one side and attempting to eliminate uncertainty through physical or emotional force.

This study hypothesizes that couples engaged in LDDRs will use more domination when it comes to conflict management due to lack of face-to-face communication. A lack of face-to-face communication potentially leads to the following: 1) increased frustration and less mutual understanding caused by less overall communication and, 2) increased likelihood of expressing negative emotions towards ones significant other (Planalp & Honeycut, 1985).

Establishing mutual understanding is much more difficult when individuals are not physically together because individuals lack the ability to pick up on non-verbal cues and thus share less nonverbal communication. Likewise, not having to face one's partner may prompt more negative statements and cutting remarks because partners simply don't have to "say it to their face," rather they are saying it over the phone. Therefore, the current study predicts that:

H2: Partners in LDDRs will use more domination strategies than partners in GCDRs.

Third, *compromise* is a search for a mutually accepted solution. Thus, each individual is asked to give up something in order to "meet in the middle" with their partner. In order to reduce the uncertainty the conflict has caused, both partners are willing to give up something in order to reach a mutually created and accepted solution. Thus, when it comes to compromise, both individuals are willing to "give a little" in order to reduce uncertainty and resolve the conflict. Peterson (1987) notes, "when a compromise is reached, interests are diluted rather than reconciled" (p. 370).

This study will argue that couples in LDDRs use more compromise in their conflict management. Research has shown that face-to-face communication is the most effective channel for satisfaction of interpersonal needs (Westmyer, Diciooco, & Rubin, 1998). Couples engaged in LDDRs experience less mutual understanding during episodes of conflict due to this deficit in face-to-face communication. When mutual understanding is low,

couples are less likely to fully understand and thus be able to satisfy one another's needs. LDDR couples may resort to simply making a compromise in order to move past the conflict because they may not fully understand what each other wants and "compromising" may simply be easier and perceived as more equitable in LDDRs. Thus, each partner agrees to give up something in order to resolve the conflict because the gain/loss ratio is immediate, consequential, and harder to work out than in a face-to-face situation. Conversely, couples in GCDRs share higher rates of mutual understanding that will lead to more mutually satisfying conflict resolutions. Therefore, the current study predicts that:

H3: Partners in LDDRs will use more compromise strategies than partners in GCDRs.

Fourth, an *integrative* agreement (sometimes referred to as collaboration) is one that simultaneously satisfies both parties' original goals and aspirations. Purely integrative agreements are rare because it is difficult to reconcile genuinely divergent interests (Peterson, 1983). Most agreements fall somewhere between compromise and integration, with the creation of an alternative that satisfies somewhat modified goals and aspirations for one or both of the people involved. While compromise seeks to find a solution that partially satisfies each party (i.e., win/lose), integrative agreement seeks a completely satisfactory solution resulting in a win-win situation. Integrative

agreements seek to reduce relationship uncertainty by bringing partners together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual achievement.

According to Peterson (1983), integrative agreements are most likely to be sought at intermediate levels of conflict intensity. If the conflict is trivial, individuals involved are likely to ignore it or choose an easier solution. If the conflict is too severe, they may be unable to stay with the difficult cooperative problem-solving task long enough to work out a creative solution (Peterson, 1983).

Integrative agreement (or collaboration), is generally thought to be the most productive and mutually satisfying type of conflict negotiation because it results in a win-win situation. Since face-to-face communication produces the highest levels of mutual understanding (Westmyer, Diciooco, & Rubin, 1998), having the luxury of face-to-face communication allows partners in GCDRs increased opportunity for successful conflict resolution. By definition, couples in GCDRs have the time and the proximity to spend resolving conflict face-to-face, which the current study predicts will have the most mutually satisfying outcome. This study hypothesizes individuals in GCDRs will use more integrative agreement strategies to manage conflict because having face-to-face communication and regular mutual access to each other is more conducive to mutual understanding and mutual agreement than long-distance communication. Therefore, the current study predicts that:

H4: Partners in GCDRs will use more integrative agreement strategies than partners in LCDRs.

Finally, *structural* improvement influences how partners treat one another more generally. For instance, couples may agree to try and use more open or supportive communication in order to reconcile a perceivably irresolvable conflict and no resolution can be agreed upon. Unlike integrative agreement, which is most likely to occur at intermediate levels of conflict intensity, structural improvement is most likely to follow very serious conflict. In close relationships, “conflict and its most fortunate forms of resolution may lead to still more profound consequences than the simultaneous goal attainments of integrative agreement” (Peterson, 1983). In the heat of battle, new issues are exposed. The generalizing tendencies of escalation will lead to the inclusion of both relevant and irrelevant issues during a conflict and both individuals will find themselves with a longer list of problems than they had at the start of the fight, and some of these may be newly recognized issues of fundamental concern. Couples may also discover qualities in each other, and sometimes in themselves, that they had not known before (Peterson, 1983).

When couples engage in conflict and cannot reach an understanding, general concessions are made by each party and agreed upon in an attempt to reduce the uncertainty that the conflict has caused. Thus, when a consensus “solution” to the dispute cannot be agreed upon, couples make adjustments to their communication behaviors in general (e.g., communicating more frequently, being more direct about their needs) rather than further attempting to negotiate the issue itself because resolving conflict may seem improbable.

Resolving conflicts in LDDRs will elicit more negative emotions due to increased frustration by both partners caused by the difficulty of negotiating mutual understanding without face-to-face communication (Planalp & Honeycut, 1985). Resolving conflict in LDDRs will be more challenging since neither individual has the ability to pick up on non-verbal cues, while face-to-face communication allows couples in GCDRs that ability. This increased difficulty, heightened frustration, and increased emotionality all caused by a deficit in face-to-face communication will lead LDDR partners to feel as though resolving conflict is too difficult in their situation (i.e., from a distance). Therefore, this study hypothesizes individuals in LDDRs will use more structural improvement strategies. Since resolutions may be harder to come by, it may be easier to make changes to their general communication behaviors rather than resolving the specific problem in an effort to simply move past the conflict. For individuals in LDDRs it may be easier to avoid the specific issue while in GCDRs proximity forces more engagement. Therefore, the current study predicts that:

H5: Partners in LDDRs will use more structural improvement strategies than partners in GCDRs.

This study will also investigate the relationship between conflict strategy and its influence on relational quality. The current study will analyze how three indicators of relational quality—satisfaction, commitment, and closeness—are affected by the use of particular conflict management strategies. The use of these and similar relational quality issues are common characteristics and

indicators of positive relational quality regardless of distance or proximity (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992; Canary & Stafford, 1993; Adams, Laursen, & Wilder, 2001). Thus, a relationship that lacks satisfaction, commitment, and closeness contradicts what it means to have a high quality relationship. Accordingly, this study focuses on how conflict management strategies are related to the relationship quality indicators of satisfaction, commitment, and closeness. The following research questions are offered:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the use of Peterson's conflict management strategies and relationship satisfaction?

RQ2: What is the relationship between the use of a Peterson's conflict management strategies and relationship commitment?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the use of Peterson's conflict management strategies and relationship closeness?

CHAPTER TWO

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of undergraduates from a medium-sized, private university in the south-central United States was solicited for this study, resulting in a total of 204 participants (91 individuals in GCDRs and 113 individuals in LDDRs). The sample included 117 females and 68 males; average age was 19.9 years ($SD = 3.3$, range = 17-44). Participants reported being white (71.6%), black (2.6%), Hispanic (10.8%), Asian (10.7%), or other (1%). The remaining 4% did not respond to this question. While some participants were still in high school (5.6%), most were pursuing an undergraduate degree (87.8%), or had already earned an undergraduate degree (2.6%), were pursuing a professional/graduate degree (3.1%), or who earned a graduate degree (1%).

All participants responded to the survey questions with their current romantic partner as the target for their answers. Participants were solicited through a mass e-mail inviting students' participation in a research study who were currently involved in a geographically close or long-distance romantic relationship. For purposes of the current study, a long-distance romantic relationship was defined as: 1) you and your significant other live at least 50 miles apart; 2) your relationship is characterized by little or no face-to-face contact; 3) your relationship may have started as geographically close and is

presently long-distance. Individuals in LDDRS had been dating for an average of 17.7 months ($SD = 17.8$, range = 1 month-8 years) and reported living on average 950 miles apart ($SD = 1712.7$, range = 50-8,000 miles). Likewise, a geographically close romantic relationship was defined as: 1) you and your romantic partner live less than 50 miles apart, and (2) your relationship is characterized by frequent face-to-face contact. Individuals in GCDRs reported dating on average 16.3 months ($SD = 17.5$, range = 1 month- 8 years).

Measurement

Based on Peterson's conflict model (1983), a conflict management scale was created for this study in order to measure which conflict management strategies were used by individuals in LDDRs and which conflict management strategies were used by individuals in GCDRs. These items included domination, integration, compromise, separation and structural. Each of these conflict management styles were measured using 5 questions that were answered in the form of Likert scales (7= Strongly Agree, 1= Strongly Disagree).

Peterson describes the conflict style of *domination* as an attempt to persuade or coerce another into choosing the dominator's side of the issue (e.g., "Winning the argument with my romantic partner is my most important goal") ($\alpha = .73$). The second conflict style, *integration*, is defined as an agreement that simultaneously satisfies both parties' original goals (e.g., "When in conflict with my romantic partner it is always important to create a mutually acceptable solution" ($\alpha = .78$). In contrast, *compromise* is framed as a process of give and

take until a mutually accepted solution is reached (e.g., “It is always important to be willing to sacrifice some of my needs in order to resolve a conflict with my romantic partner” ($\alpha = .63$). Finally, *separation* is described as a period of “cooling off” first and then returning to the conflict negotiation at a later point in time (e.g., “When in conflict with my romantic partner, I always leave emotion out of the argument” ($\alpha = .64$). For the purposes of the current study, the fifth item of Peterson’s conflict model (i.e., *structural*—changing how partners treat one another more generally) was eliminated from data analysis due to low reliability ($\alpha = .41$).

Relationship satisfaction was measured using an existing scale developed by Floyd and Morman (2000). This scale used six Likert items to measure the extent of participant’s satisfaction and contentment with the nature of the relationship with their significant other. This scale included items such as “I am very satisfied with the relationship I have with my significant other” ($\alpha = .92$). Next, *relationship commitment* was measured using a modified version of the Investment Model Scale developed by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998) that measured the extent to which a person is devoted or loyal to their significant other. This five-item scale included items such as “I want our relationship to last for a very long time” ($\alpha = .95$). Finally, *relationship closeness* was assessed with the single-item Inclusion of Other in the Self scale developed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992). This scale consisted of seven Venn-like diagrams, each symbolizing varying points of overlap. Participants were instructed to identify the image that best depicted the level of closeness with their significant other.

Procedures

In order to recruit participants for the current study, a mass e-mail was sent out to nearly 1,000 students enrolled in a freshman communication course. A mass e-mail was also sent to a sorority, friends of the researcher, and encouraged participants to forward the survey onto other individuals involved in romantic relationships. The e-mail invited individuals to take part in the study if they were currently involved in a dating-type/not-married, romantic relationship. The e-mail included web-links to 2 surveys, one identified for individuals in long-distance romantic relationships and the other identified for individuals in geographically close romantic relationships. The definitions for both geographically close and long-distance relationship were provided (see above). Participants were instructed to find a place and time when they would be free from distractions and could be alone (i.e., not with their significant other). Participants were instructed to click on the web-link that applied to their relationship status and complete the on-line survey (supported by Survey Monkey) with respect to their current romantic relationship. At the end of the survey, participants were thanked for their participation in the study and encouraged to forward the survey web-links to their significant other and/or to anyone they knew who was also in a non-marital, romantic relationship.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

The purpose of the current project was to assess potential differences in conflict management strategies used by relational partners who were in geographically close versus long-distance romantic relationships. Using Peterson's conflict model (1983) as a framework, five hypotheses were developed to test for any differences that potentially existed between conflict management strategy use and relationship type. However, as noted above, due to the poor reliability of the "structural" conflict negotiation strategy, Hypothesis 5 was removed from the current project. Additionally, three relational quality variables were analyzed to assess the relationship between the use of a particular conflict strategy and satisfaction, closeness, and commitment.

To test hypotheses 1-4, a MANOVA was designed with relationship type (LDDR or GCDR) and sex as the independent variables and the four conflict management strategies noted above as the dependent variables. This study predicted that there would be differences in the use of particular conflict management strategies between LDDRs and GCDRs. The multivariate test of the model for relationship type was non-significant (Wilks' Lambda= .973, $p = .292$) as was the test for sex (Wilks' Lambda= .962, $p = .138$). Therefore, without an overall significant multivariate model, no univariate main effects were available for analysis. Therefore, all four hypotheses were not supported.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Conflict Management Strategies by Sex

Sex	Dominance	Integration	Compromise	Separation
Men	<i>M</i> = 3.250 <i>SD</i> = .897	<i>M</i> = 4.715 <i>SD</i> = 1.105	<i>M</i> = 5.402 <i>SD</i> = 1.029	<i>M</i> = 4.289 <i>SD</i> = .986
Women	<i>M</i> = 3.337 <i>SD</i> = 1.039	<i>M</i> = 5.000 <i>SD</i> = .992	<i>M</i> = 5.554 <i>SD</i> = .890	<i>M</i> = 4.105 <i>SD</i> = 1.22
GCDR	<i>M</i> = 3.467 <i>SD</i> = .909	<i>M</i> = 4.922 <i>SD</i> = 1.074	<i>M</i> = 5.456 <i>SD</i> = .860	<i>M</i> = 4.028 <i>SD</i> = 1.125
LDDR	<i>M</i> = 3.164 <i>SD</i> = 1.038	<i>M</i> = 4.877 <i>SD</i> = 1.013	<i>M</i> = 5.537 <i>SD</i> = 1.012	<i>M</i> = 4.297 <i>SD</i> = 1.148

While no between group differences were revealed, several t-tests were conducted to search for any potential within group differences regarding the use of the conflict negotiation styles (see Table 1). Results indicated that for both men and women, the use of domination was significantly different from the other three styles and was determined to be the least used conflict management strategy. For both men and women, integration was significantly different than compromise and separation, i.e., both men and women use integration more than separation, but not more than compromise. Finally, for both men and women, compromise was significantly different than separation, i.e., both men and women use compromise more than separation. Overall, for both men and women, compromise was the most used of the four conflict management strategies.

Research questions 1-3 asked about the relationship between the use of particular conflict management strategies and relational satisfaction, commitment, and closeness (see Table 2). Pearson correlation tests revealed significant associations between the conflict management strategies of

dominance, integration, and compromise and the relational quality indicators of commitment and satisfaction.

Table 2
Significant Differences in Conflict Management Strategy Use by Sex

MEN	Conf. Strat.	M	SD	t-value	df	Sig
Pair 1	Dominance	3.222	0.918	-8.517	66	.000
	Integration	4.719	1.097			
Pair 2	Dominance	3.268	0.923	-11.44	71	.000
	Compromise	5.375	1.029			
Pair 3	Dominance	3.294	0.902	-6.22	70	.000
	Separation	4.339	0.991			
Pair 4	Integration	4.719	1.096	-5.125	66	.000
	Compromise	5.418	1.031			
Pair 5	Integration	4.715	1.105	2.529	65	.014
	Separation	4.289	0.986			
Pair 6	Compromise	5.359	1.028	7.5	70	.000
	Separation	4.339	0.991			

WOMEN		M	SD	t-value	df	Sig
Pair 1	Dominance	3.326	1.039	-12.475	120	.000
	Integration	5.001	0.989			
Pair 2	Dominance	3.325	1.028	-15.795	122	.000
	Compromise	5.548	0.887			
Pair 3	Dominance	3.308	1.044	-4.763	121	.000
	Separation	4.091	1.218			
Pair 4	Integration	5.002	0.987	-6.784	120	.000
	Compromise	5.555	0.882			
Pair 5	Integration	5.008	0.995	7.36	120	.000
	Separation	4.094	1.213			
Pair 6	Compromise	5.551	0.889	14.486	121	.000
	Separation	4.105	1.209			

The conflict management strategy domination was found to be negatively correlated with both commitment and satisfaction. Integration and compromise, on the other hand, were both positively correlated with commitment and with satisfaction (see Table 3). Thus, regardless of the geographic distance between romantic partners, those who engage in the conflict negotiation strategies of

integration and compromise appear to have more satisfying and committed relationships while those using the dominance approach appear to have less satisfying and less committed relationships.

Table 3
Conflict Management Strategy and Relational Quality Correlations

	Dominance	Integration	Compromise
Commitment	-.161*	.366***	.332***
Satisfaction	-.261***	.343***	.268***

*p=.05

***p=.000

To further test for any differences between LDDR and GCDR in regards to the relational quality variables of satisfaction, commitment, and closeness, an ANOVA was designed with relationship type (LDDR or GCDR) as the independent variable and satisfaction, closeness, and commitment as the dependent variables (see Table 4). Relationship type was found to have a significant main effect for both satisfaction ($F(1,175) = 11.24, p = .001$) and commitment ($F(1, 175) = 9.4, p = .003$) such that individuals involved in GCDRs reported higher levels of commitment ($M = 6.42, SD = .99$) and satisfaction ($M = 5.82, SD = 1.21$) than individuals involved in LDDRs (commitment $M = 5.919, SD = 1.229$; satisfaction $M = 5.19, SD = 1.41$).

Table 4
Mean and Standard Deviation of Relational Quality Indicators by Sex and Distance

Indep. Variable	Satisfaction	Commitment	Closeness
Male	$M = 5.459$ $SD = 1.395$	$M = 6.032$ $SD = 1.319$	$M = 5.43$ $SD = 1.375$
Female	$M = 5.525$ $SD = 1.322$	$M = 6.245$ $SD = 1.026$	$M = 5.31$ $SD = 1.451$
GCDR	$M = 5.820$ $SD = 1.207$	$M = 6.422$ $SD = .995$	$M = 5.42$ $SD = 1.405$

LDDR	$M= 5.194$ $SD- 1.406$	$M= 5,919$ $SD= 1.229$	$M= 5.29$ $SD= 1.440$
------	---------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

This study examined the use of conflict management strategies in long-distance dating relationships compared to geographically close dating relationships. The study applied the conceptualization of Peterson's (1983) conflict management strategies to the context of dating relationships. The purpose of the study was to test for any differences between the two groups, LDDR and GCDR, with regard to the use of Peterson's five conflict management strategies. This study also sought to assess the relationship between feelings of satisfaction, commitment, and closeness and each conflict management strategy.

Conflict Management Strategy Use in LDDRs vs. GCDRs

The results of this study indicate that no significant differences exist between conflict management strategy use among individuals in LDDRs and GCDRs. Thus, relational type appears to play no significant role in determining conflict management strategy use. Though this study hypothesized there would be differences in the types of conflict management strategies individuals used based on whether they were in LDDRs or GCDRs, the data did not support the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that partners in LDDRs would use more separation strategies than partners in GCDRs. This was predicted because

couples in GCDRs are physically together while engaged in a conflict, and may even live together, which would make it harder to physically walk away from the conflict. The results indicate there is no significant difference in use of separation between LDDRs and GCDRs.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that partners in LDDRs would use more domination strategies than partners in GCDRs. This was predicted because less face-to-face communication during a conflict potentially leads to increased frustration and less mutual understanding as well as increased likelihood of expressing negative emotions towards ones significant other. The results indicate that there is no significant difference in use of domination between LDDRs and GCDRs.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that partners in LDDRs would use more compromise strategies than partners in GCDRs. This was predicted because LDDR partners experience less face-to-face communication which may lead to less mutual understanding. When mutual understanding is low, LDDR couples are less likely to fully understand and thus be able to satisfy one another's needs and will instead make a compromise in order to move past the conflict. The results indicate there is no significant difference in use of compromise between LDDRs and GCDRs.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that partners in GCDRs would use more integrative agreement strategies than partners in LDDRs. This was predicted because integrative agreement is generally thought to be the most productive and mutually satisfying type of conflict strategy. Since face-to-face

communication produces the highest levels of mutual understanding (Westmyer, Diciooco, & Rubin, 1998), having the luxury of face-to-face communication allows partners in GCDRs increased opportunity for successful conflict resolution. The results indicate there is no significant difference in use of integration between LDDRs and GCDRs.

These findings, contrary to the study's hypotheses, require explanation. Perhaps the differences caused by increased uncertainty in LDDRs lie in the *way* couples communicate in general rather than in their conflict management. Thus, once couples have reached the point of engaging in a conflict, LDDR and GCDR tendencies are basically the same, but what is different is their communication prior to engaging in the conflict, for example, their often limited communication and limited topic choices.

Thus, one limitation of the current study is that it only measured conflict management strategies and did not focus on the differences in communication styles among partners in either LDDRs or GCDRs that lead to or potentially help *avoid* conflict and thus, the need for conflict management strategies. In order to fully understand conflict management styles between LDDRs and GCDRs it may be necessary to focus on communication practices and causes *prior to* the occurrence of conflict.

In order to explain the lack of difference found in conflict management strategy use between couples in GCDRs and LDDRs, it is important focus on the inherent differences between GCDR and LDDR relationships that lead to differences in communication practices rather than differences in conflict

management strategy use. As previously discussed, compared to GCDRs, interaction is restricted among LDDR partners, thus LDDR partners experience a deficit of everyday talk which is important because everyday talk is one way partners learn both positive and negative qualities about one another. Limited face-to-face talk in LDDRs takes on elevated importance for the maintenance and evaluation of the relationship because while proximal couples have a virtually unlimited array of conversational topics, LDDR partners talk about a much more limited range of topics (Stafford, 2010). Thus, communication in LDDRs is not only limited, but also may tend to be qualitatively different from GCDR communication, affecting how LDDR partners relate and view one another compared to GCDR partners.

As mentioned earlier, LDDRs are often cast as inherently dissatisfying and difficult relationships given the restrictions on partners' day-to-day interaction, yet many LDDR partners reported relational quality levels equal or greater than those of GCDR partners (Stafford, 2010). This suggests LDDR partners might transform the given limitations of their relational situation and increased uncertainty to produce relational rewards, compensate for relational costs, and thus foster favorable outcomes. For instance, according to Stafford (2010), individuals in LDDRs relative to those in GCDRs were found to characterize their everyday talk as more intimate in focus. Thus, LDDR partners adapt to the limitations of their given relational context through adjustments in their communication such as taboo topic avoidance, conflict avoidance, and selective positive self-presentation. Furthermore, LDDR partners potentially narrow or

limit the types of communication in which they engage. Accentuating intimacy and positive affect in their talk, and avoiding discussion of potentially problematic or taboo topics appears to help couples in LDDRs to maintain a positive outlook on their relationship and potentially avoid conflict.

Given that distance can create uncertainty among partners (Emmers & Canary, 1996), intimacy-focused and low-conflict interaction styles might reduce uncertainty by perpetuating positive attributions or even idealized impressions. Not only might LDDR partners have altered communication styles when separated, this might also allow fewer opportunities for conflict to emerge. As a consequence of their having lesser opportunity for day-to-day conflict and interference from their partner, LDDR partners might perceive greater intimacy and lower conflict in their interaction due to their limited contact and thus limited reasons for conflict. Perhaps it is easier for couples in LDDR relationships to engage in denial and avoid conflict due to the lack of face-to-face interaction.

Intimate and positive interaction styles probably serve critical needs salient to LDDR couples. As a consequence of diminished physical intimacy and elevated levels of uncertainty (Emmers & Canary, 1996), LDDR partners could be driven to engage in certain communicative and attributional practices to sustain the relationship in a satisfying state. For example, maintaining positive attributions about ones partner, avoiding topics that may potentially lead to uneasiness or increased uncertainty, and focusing on future reunions may all be strategies LDDR couples use in order to sustain a positive attitude toward the

relationship. Such transformations might also be enacted to help LDDR partners' compensate for their relatively lower degrees of mutual dependence.

This type of topic avoidance is demonstrated in research on spouses of individuals in the military. Although open disclosures are often related to positive health outcomes (Smyth & Pennebaker, 2001) and relational satisfaction (Finkenauer & Hazam, 2000), individuals may be hesitant to share stressful information with others, particularly if they fear the disclosure will cause too much strain for the recipient, and when individuals are geographically separated (Hagedoorn, Kuijer, Buunk, DeJong, & Wobes, 2000). In an effort to shield their partner from distress, individuals may engage in protective buffering. Protective buffering occurs when people hide concerns or deny problems in efforts to keep their own stress from affecting others (Hagedoorn et al., 2000). Especially in long distance situations, protective buffering allows couples to maintain positive conversations while avoiding potentially stressful topics of conversation. Protective buffering may result in higher stress levels and lower relational satisfaction for both the protective bufferer and the individual being protected (Joseph & Afifi, 2010).

This avoidance argument is further supported by research on idealization and reunions in LDDR relationships. Although LDDR couples have restricted face-to-face communication, they tend to perceive their communication to be of higher quality than GCDR couples (Stafford, & Reske, 1990). Even when LDDR partners are together (face-to-face) LDDR communication appears to vary from communication within GDCR couples. Many LDDR partners engage in short,

planned visits, often on weekends or vacations. During these visits, LDDR partners tend to avoid unpleasanties and purposely avoid areas of conflict, which may prevent partners' discovery or negotiation of areas of disagreement (Sahlstein, 2004).

Aside from actual interaction, idealization may occur by *thinking* about the relationship during separation. The relative absence of interaction many LDDR partners have, may serve to inspire these relationship-enhancing thoughts. Several studies suggest invoking positive memories, engaging in daydreaming, imagining interactions and simply thinking about partner are means through which LDDR partners continue their relationships (Holt & Stone, 1988).

Furthermore, LDDR partners are less likely than GCDR partners to encounter what Kelley and Thibaut (1978) term *discordance* and *noncorrespondence*, which can be conceptualized as the degree to which partners influence, or interfere with, one another's day-to-day actions. When partners disagree about how to spend a weekend, for example, that disagreement reflects discordance and noncorrespondence. Because GCDR partners typically spend more time copresent and interact more frequently overall than LDDR partners, it makes sense that GCDR partners have greater opportunity for discordance and noncorrespondence in their relationship (Stafford, 2010). Thus, not only might LDDR partners have altered communication styles while separated, they might also have fewer reasons for conflict to emerge. As a consequence of their having lesser opportunity for day-to-day conflict and interference from their partner,

LDDR partners probably perceive greater intimacy and lower conflict in their relationship than GCDR couples.

Clearly, there are differences between LDDR and GCDR relationships. These differences may be more prominent in the way couples communicate with one another, instead of in their conflict management as predicted by this study. Based on this study, no significant differences were found between GCDR and LDDR couples in terms of conflict management. GCDR and LDDR couples are very similar when it comes to conflict and appear to handle conflict situations using the same strategies at similar rates. Apparently, conflict management in romantic relationships operates in the same ways whether individuals are face-to-face, on the phone, communicating via e-mail, text message, letter, or any other medium. While it appears differences exist in general communication practices between individuals in LDDRs and GCDRs, there were no data to support differences in conflict management strategy use between these couples.

Perhaps emotion plays a large role in these conflict situations; once a conflict is taking place, regardless of the circumstances in terms of communication medium, individuals will react in the same way. One explanation could be that emotion is what fuels individuals through the conflict, thus, whether individuals are face-to-face or thousands of miles away, they will react in the same way. Likewise, perhaps individuals' enduring personality could play a role in this as well. Regardless of the situation, whether individuals are face-to-face or long-distance, it could be that individual's true feelings and emotions will always come out when a conflict takes place. People are creatures of habit,

thus, even when couples geographical separation may change, their habits and styles of conflict management may remain the same.

Once couples reach the point of interpersonal conflict, the strategies these couples use appear to be similar; however, perhaps differences lie within LDDR couples everyday communication practices. Initially, this study predicted that uncertainty would lead to differences in conflict management strategies among LDDR and GCDR couples. Now, it can be surmised that uncertainty leads to differences in communication practices, which might lead to increased conflict avoidance, for example. Uncertainty may not affect *how* conflict is managed between couples (i.e., conflict management styles); rather it may have a more immediate effect in that it influences the day-to-day communication styles and relational maintenance strategies of LDDR couples.

Along with conflict management strategies, this study measured levels of satisfaction, closeness and commitment. This study found that women report higher levels of commitment than men. Individuals in GCDRs experience higher levels of commitment and satisfaction than individuals in LDDRs. This could be explained by the increase of mutual dependence experienced by GCDR couples due to their frequent face-to-face interactions. A decreased amount of mutual dependence means decreased reliance on one another and often leads LDDR partners to question their relational quality and longevity (Stafford, 2010). This result supports the arguments made by Van Horn et al. (1997) that GCDRs are more satisfying than LDDRs. Alternatively, this conclusion contradicts the findings of Stafford & Merolla (2010) that LDDRs are more satisfying and

challenge Guldner and Swenson (1995) that there are no significant differences in relational satisfaction.

Apparently there are many variables that affect how satisfying individuals rate their relationship. Aside from the GCDR and LDDR distinctions, perhaps length of the relationship, length of time spent apart (both as a whole as well as since the couples last reunion), past relationship experience (whether individuals have been in a LDDR prior to this relationship), distance apart, frequency of contact, likeliness to become a GCDR in the future, and outside support (i.e., friends and family) are all factors that affect satisfaction. Perhaps each of these studies only accounts for certain relational variables when conducting their study, thus each study is not necessarily accounting for the same information and thus differing conclusions are reached. Clearly, more research is needed on the subject of GCDR and LDDR relationship satisfaction and closeness.

While no significant findings can be reported in terms of conflict management strategy use by couple type, significant differences were discovered between sex and conflict management strategy use. First, both men and women reported using more compromise, integration and separation most frequently (respectively), while domination was the least used strategy by both sexes. Both men and women's use of compromise and integration appears to be reflecting a focus on maintaining relationships (Euwema & Van de Vliert, 1990). Separation assumes an eventual reunion in order to resolve the issue; avoidance would represent separation with no resolution and was not measured by this

study. Overall, compromise, which is recognized as a constructive conflict management strategy was the most frequently reported conflict management style used by both men and women (Zacchilli & Hendrick, 2009).

Conflict Management Strategy Use and Satisfaction, Commitment, and Closeness

The results of this study revealed significant correlations between dominance, integration, compromise and certain relational quality indicators. Dominance was negatively correlated with both commitment and satisfaction, meaning as use of dominant conflict management strategies increase, feelings of commitment and satisfaction to the relationship decrease. Intuitively this make since, because dominance is often viewed as a selfish, one-sided, method of conflict management. If one individual in the relationship is using forceful, selfish, maybe even threatening conflict management tactics, not only is the other individual going to be potentially less satisfied and less invested in the relationship, but the perpetrator may also come out of the argument with residual anger and negative feelings towards the relationship and his/her partner. Integration and compromise were significantly and positively correlated with commitment and satisfaction. Likewise, when integration and compromise strategies are used, feelings of commitment and satisfaction appear to increase. When individuals are invested in catering to the needs of each other and maintaining a mutually satisfying, give and take view of conflict, both individuals are more likely to maintain positive feelings towards the relationship post conflict.

Limitations

As previously mentioned, one limitation of this study is that it did not account for the conflict management strategy of avoidance. Adding a conflict avoidance scale to this study, or simply adding avoidance as one of the conflict management strategies tested, would have allowed this study to measure the rates of conflict avoidance among GCDR and LDDR couples. Since it appears avoidance may play a role in LDDR couples conflict management, adding an avoidance measure may have produced useful data.

Another limitation may be the sample itself. Though this study collected data on how long individuals had been in their current relationship, this study did not ask LDDR partners how long the relationship has been long-distance, or if individuals had been in LDDRs in previous relationships. If LDDRs require an adjustment in communication practices, it would make sense that increased time fosters said adjustment period. Comparing couples who had been in LDDRs for over one year to couples who had just begun a LDDR would have provided an interesting insight into length of time dating and long-distance conflict management strategies. Likewise, comparing the conflict management strategies of individuals who had previous experience in LDDRs viewed their current LDDR to individuals who had not ever been in a LDDR would have provided further exploration into LDDR research.

Finally, a dyadic data set may have provided further insight into LDDR and GCDR comparison. The study encouraged individuals to pass the survey onto their significant other, but since the surveys were anonymous there was no

way of connecting partners responses when comparing data. Perhaps a comparison of each partners' responses would have provided key insights into perceptions of male verses female conflict management. Likewise, it would have been possible to compare one individual's rates of satisfaction, commitment, and closeness with the other partners' conflict management style in order to measure relational quality based on conflict management style.

Future Research

One area of future research could be to examine LDDR conflict management and relational quality based on how long couples have been dating. Comparing couples who have been dating for a long period of time to those individuals who just began LDDRs to see how their conflict management strategy use and their overall relational quality compared would have been interesting. A study that looked at individuals who are away for a specified period of time (i.e., military or college) resulting in a temporary LDDR could provide further exploration into LDDR research. Likewise, examining LDDR conflict management and relational quality based on how far couples lived apart would be another relevant topic. It would be interesting to see how length of distance plays a role in conflict management strategy use and overall relational quality.

Another area for future research could look at medium use in LDDRs. Comparing synchronous (i.e., telephone, Skype) with non-synchronous (text messaging, e-mail, letter) communication in order to determine which mediums as well as frequency of communication provide the highest levels of relational

quality would be interesting. Furthermore, this study might take a closer look at medium use in conflict management in order to determine which mediums support which types of conflict management strategies and result in the highest levels of relational quality.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reported here advances our current understanding of GCDRs and LDDRs in three important ways. First, the investigation compared GCDRs and LDDRs on the basis of conflict management, a topic that has yet to be explored in the field of communication. Second, the study demonstrated through the use of Uncertainty Reduction Theory many of the challenges of LDDRs created by distance. Third, though contrary to initial predictions, the study found there were no differences in conflict management strategy use between couples in GCDRs and couples in LDDRs. The third finding encourages further investigation into the affect of uncertainty on GCDR's and LDDR's . There are many variables that can be accounted for when studying LDDRs which is perhaps why there have been so many differing conclusions drawn from LDDR research studies regarding relational quality. Until each study is explicit about the variables their study *does* and *does not* account for when measuring LDDR data, caution should be used when generalizing all these findings under the umbrella of LDDR research.

APPENDIX

Survey Tool

Conflict Management in Long-Distance Romantic Relationships

We would like you to participate in a study about conflict management in geographically close romantic relationships. This questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate, you will be completing the attached questionnaire for graduate student Whitney Reys. The survey will ask questions about how you negotiate conflict in your romantic relationship. Your help in this process is greatly appreciated.

Your answers to the questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential. The only way anyone will know your responses to the questionnaire is if you tell them. Furthermore, all survey information will be destroyed after the study has been completed.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts of this study. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. Results from this study will help researchers further understand conflict management strategies in geographically close romantic relationships.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. By completing the questionnaire, you will be signifying your consent to participate in this project. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Baylor University's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research at 254-710-2236.

Thank you for your participation in this study!

Sincerely,

Whitney Reys
Department of Communication Studies
Baylor University
573-424-1477
Whitney_Reys@Baylor.edu

Mark T. Morman, Ph. D.
Department of Communication Studies
Baylor University
254-710-6914
Mark_Morman@Baylor.edu

This is a study about how couples in long-distance romantic relationships manage conflict. You will be asked to think about your current romantic partner and complete this questionnaire in reference to your relationship with him or her. These questions will focus on various strategies used to resolve conflict in romantic relationships.

Please do not discuss the questions or share your answers with your romantic partner until you have completed and the questionnaire. The information you provide will help researchers to better understand conflict management in romantic relationships.

Thank you for your participation!

Romantic Partner

Please think about your long-distance romantic partner. A long-distance romantic relationship has the following characteristics:

1. You and your romantic partner live at least 50 miles apart.
2. Your relationship is characterized by little or no face-to-face contact.
3. Your relationship may have started as geographically close and is presently long-distance. In this case, your relationship would count as long-distance.

If you do not have a long-distance romantic partner, then do not continue this survey. Only individual's age 18 or older can take this survey.

Conflict Management in Long-Distance Romantic Relationships

Conflict Style: Thinking about conflict with your romantic partner, please answer the following questions regarding how you typically handle conflict:

1. Winning the argument with my romantic partner is my most important goal

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I always leave emotion out of the argument

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. When resolving an argument with my romantic partner, I try to “meet in the middle”

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. During an argument with my romantic partner, the most important thing is for me to get my point across

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. When in conflict with my romantic partner, willingness to compromise is important

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

6. It is important to realize that not all conflict can be resolved

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

7. I do not stop pushing for my position until my romantic partner gives in

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

8. I do not always attempt to resolve a conflict immediately after it takes place with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

9. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I try not to budge on my position

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

10. It is always important to be willing to sacrifice some of my needs in order to resolve a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

11. When in conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to reach a win-win resolution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

12. When in conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to achieve a mutually satisfying solution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

13. I am always willing to spend as much time as it takes to fully resolve a conflict with my romantic partner that meets both our needs

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

14. I always try to remain calm and collected when engaged in an argument with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

15. In order to resolve a conflict, it is sometimes necessary to make changes in the way my romantic partner and I communicate with one another

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

16. When resolving a conflict with my romantic partner, anything less than satisfying both our desires *entirely* is unacceptable to me

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

17. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I always take time to gather my thoughts before negotiating a conflict

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

18. Sometimes conflicts cannot be resolved with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

19. When in conflict with my romantic partner it is always important to create a mutually acceptable solution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

20. I always try to take time to “cool off” before attempting to resolve a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

21. I try to modify my behavior in order to prevent certain arguments from reoccurring with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

22. When attempting to resolve conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to fully satisfy both our needs

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

23. There is always a clear winner and a loser after an argument with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

24. I always try to learn something from every argument I have with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

25. It is often necessary to give up something in order to negotiate a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

In this section, you will be asked questions regarding satisfaction in your current long-distance romantic relationship. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number:

1. I'm happy with my romantic relationship.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. There is not much I would change about the relationship I have with my romantic partner right now.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. My relationship with my romantic partner is not very satisfying.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. My relationship with my romantic partner is just the way I want it to be.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. I am very satisfied with the relationship I have with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Commitment in Romantic Relationships

With your current long-distance romantic partner in mind, please respond to these questions about the nature of your level of commitment to the relationship you have with this person:

1. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. I would feel upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

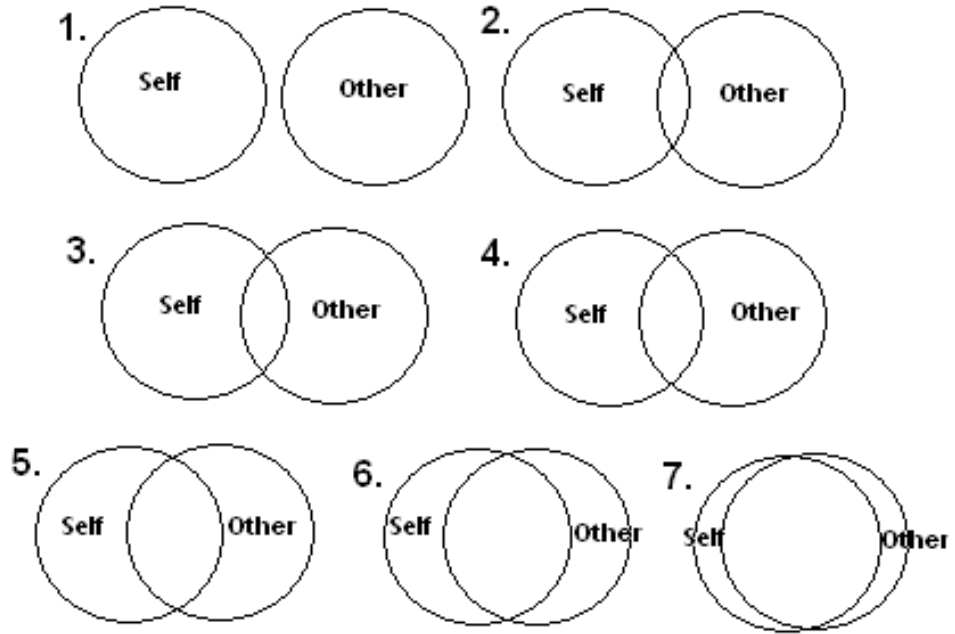
3. I feel attached to our relationship—strongly linked to my romantic partner
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. I am dedicated to maintaining my relationship with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Closeness in Romantic Relationships

How close is your relationship with your long-distance romantic partner right now? The circles below are meant to depict you (“self”) and your romantic partner (“other”). Please indicate which pair of circles best illustrates *how close you and your romantic partner feel toward each other*.



About Yourself

1. Sex: Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Which best describes your education?

- _____ High school Degree
- _____ Pursuing Undergraduate Degree
- _____ Earned Undergraduate Degree
- _____ Pursuing MA/PhD/Professional Degree
- _____ Earned Graduate/Professional Degree

4. Race:

- _____ Caucasian
- _____ Black/African-American
- _____ Hispanic
- _____ Asian/Pacific Islander
- _____ Native American
- _____ Other

4. How long have you been dating your romantic partner?

_____ Years _____ Months

5. How far do you live from your romantic partner?

_____ Miles

Thank you for your participation in this study!

We appreciate your time and input in completing this questionnaire.

The information you have provided will help researchers to better understand conflict management strategies used by couples in long-distance romantic relationships.

Also, if you would pass this survey link on to your romantic partner, or anyone else you know who is in a long-distance romantic relationship that would be very helpful!

If you have any questions please let the researchers know.

Conflict Management in Geographically Close Romantic Relationships

We would like you to participate in a study about conflict management in geographically close romantic relationships. This questionnaire should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

If you agree to participate, you will be completing the attached questionnaire for graduate student Whitney Reys. The survey will ask questions about how you negotiate conflict in your romantic relationship. Your help in this process is greatly appreciated.

Your answers to the questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential. The only way anyone will know your responses to the questionnaire is if you tell them. Furthermore, all survey information will be destroyed after the study has been completed.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts of this study. You must be 18 or older to participate in this study. Results from this study will help researchers further understand conflict management strategies in geographically close romantic relationships.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time. By completing the questionnaire, you will be signifying your consent to participate in this project. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Baylor University's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects in Research at 254-710-2236.

Thank you for your participation in this study!

Sincerely,

Whitney Reys
Department of Communication Studies
Baylor University
573-424-1477
Whitney_Reys@Baylor.edu

Mark T. Morman, Ph. D.
Department of Communication Studies
Baylor University
254-710-6914
Mark_Morman@Baylor.edu

This is a study about how couples in geographically close romantic relationships manage conflict. You will be asked to think about your current romantic partner and complete this questionnaire in reference to your relationship with him or her. These questions will focus on various strategies used to resolve conflict in romantic relationships.

Please do not discuss the questions or share your answers with your romantic partner until you have completed the questionnaire. The information you provide will help researchers to better understand conflict management in romantic relationships.

Thank you for your participation!

Romantic Partner

Please think about your geographically close romantic partner. A geographically close romantic relationship has the following characteristics:

1. You and your romantic partner live *less than* 50 miles apart.
2. Your relationship is characterized by frequent face-to-face contact.

If you do not have a geographically close romantic relationship, then do not continue this survey. Only individuals age 18 or older can take this survey.

Conflict Management in Geographically Close Romantic Relationships

Conflict Style: Thinking about conflict with your romantic partner, please answer the following questions regarding how you typically handle conflict:

1. Winning the argument with my romantic partner is my most important goal

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I always leave emotion out of the argument

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. When resolving an argument with my romantic partner, I try to “meet in the middle”

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. During an argument with my romantic partner, the most important thing is for me to get my point across

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. When in conflict with my romantic partner, willingness to compromise is important

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

6. It is important to realize that not all conflict can be resolved

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

7. I do not stop pushing for my position until my romantic partner gives in

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

8. I do not always attempt to resolve a conflict immediately after it takes place with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

9. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I try not to budge on my position

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

10. It is always important to be willing to sacrifice some of my needs in order to resolve a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

11. When in conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to reach a win-win resolution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

12. When in conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to achieve a mutually satisfying solution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

13. I am always willing to spend as much time as it takes to fully resolve a conflict with my romantic partner that meets both our needs

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

14. I always try to remain calm and collected when engaged in an argument with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

15. In order to resolve a conflict, it is sometimes necessary to make changes in the way my romantic partner and I communicate with one another

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

16. When resolving a conflict with my romantic partner, anything less than satisfying both our desires *entirely* is unacceptable to me

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

17. When in conflict with my romantic partner, I always take time to gather my thoughts before negotiating a conflict

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

18. Sometimes conflicts cannot be resolved with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

19. When in conflict with my romantic partner it is always important to create a mutually acceptable solution

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

20. I always try to take time to “cool off” before attempting to resolve a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

21. I try to modify my behavior in order to prevent certain arguments from reoccurring with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

22. When attempting to resolve conflict with my romantic partner, it is always important to fully satisfy both our needs

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

23. There is always a clear winner and a loser after an argument with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

24. I always try to learn something from every argument I have with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

25. It is often necessary to give up something in order to negotiate a conflict with my romantic partner

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Satisfaction in Romantic Relationships

In this section, you will be asked questions regarding satisfaction in your current geographically close romantic relationship. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the appropriate number:

1. I'm happy with my romantic relationship.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. There is not much I would change about the relationship I have with my romantic partner right now.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. My relationship with my romantic partner is not very satisfying.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. My relationship with my romantic partner is just the way I want it to be.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. I am very satisfied with the relationship I have with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Commitment in Romantic Relationships

With your current geographically close romantic partner in mind, please respond to these questions about the nature of your level of commitment to the relationship you have with this person:

1. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. I would feel upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

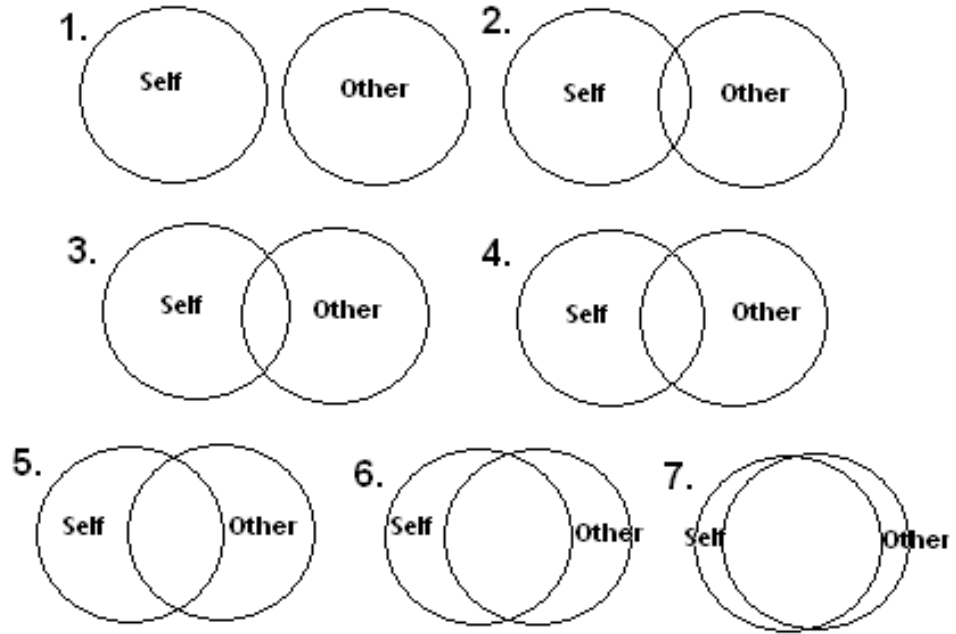
3. I feel attached to our relationship—strongly linked to my romantic partner
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. I am dedicated to maintaining my relationship with my romantic partner.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

Closeness in Romantic Relationships

How close is your relationship with your geographically close romantic partner right now? The circles below are meant to depict you ("self") and your romantic partner ("other"). Please indicate which pair of circles best illustrates *how close you and your romantic partner feel toward each other*.



About Yourself

1. Sex: Male Female

2. Age: _____

3. Which best describes your education?

- _____ High school Degree
- _____ Pursuing Undergraduate Degree
- _____ Earned Undergraduate Degree
- _____ Pursuing MA/PhD/Professional Degree
- _____ Earned Graduate/Professional Degree

4. Race:

- _____ Caucasian
- _____ Black/African-American
- _____ Hispanic
- _____ Asian/Pacific Islander
- _____ Native American
- _____ Other

4. How long have you been dating your romantic partner?

_____ Years _____ Months

5. How far do you live from your romantic partner?

_____ Miles

Thank you for your participation in this study!

We appreciate your time and input in completing this questionnaire.

The information you have provided will help researchers to better understand conflict management strategies used by couples in geographically close romantic relationships.

Also, if you would pass this survey link on to your romantic partner, or anyone else you know who is in a geographically close romantic relationship that would be very helpful!

If you have any questions please let the researchers know.

REFERENCES

- Adams, R., Laursen, B., & Wilder, D. (2001). Characteristics of closeness in adolescent romantic relationships. *Journal of Adolescence, 24*(3), 353-363.
- Afifi, W. A., & Reichert, T. (1996). Understanding the role of uncertainty in jealousy experience and expression. *Communication Reports, 9*, 93-103.
- American Academy of Physicians. (2009). Long distance relationships. *Annals of Internal Medicine.*
- Aron, A., Aron, E., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self scale and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63*, 596-612.
- Armour, S. (1998). Married with separation: More couples live apart as careers put miles between them. *USA Today*, pp. B1-B2.
- Barbour, A. (1976). *Louder than words: nonverbal communication*. Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Berger, C. (1987). Communication under uncertainty. In M.E. Roloff & F.R. Miller (Eds.), *Interpersonal processes: New directions in communication research* (p. 39-62). Newbury Park, C.A.: Sage.
- Berger, C. (1995). Inscrutable goals, uncertain plans, and the production of communicative action. In C.R. Berger & H.M. Burgoon (Eds.), *Communication and social influence processes* (pp. 1-28). East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.
- Berger, C. R., & Bradac, J. J. (1982). Language and social knowledge: Uncertainty in interpersonal relationships. London: Edward Arnold.
- Berger, C. R., & Calabrese, R. J. (1975). Some explorations in initial interactions and beyond: Toward a developmental theory of interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 1*, 99-112.
- Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1992). Relational maintenance strategies and equity in marriage. *Communication Monographs, 59*, 243-267.

- Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1993). Preservation of relational characteristics: Maintenance strategies, equity, and locus of control. In P.J. Kalbfleisch (ed.), *Interpersonal communication: Evolving interpersonal relationships* (pp. 237-259). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Dainton, M., & Aylor, B. (2001). A relational uncertainty analysis of jealousy, trust, and maintenance in long-distance versus geographically close relationships. *Communication Quarterly, 49*, 172-188.
- Dainton, M., & Aylor, B. (2002). Patterns of communication channel use in the maintenance of long-distance relationships. *Communication Research Reports, 19*(2), 118-129.
- Dellman-Jenkins, M., Bernard-Paolucci, T. S., & Rushing, B. (1994). Does distance make the heart grow fonder? A comparison of college students in long-distance and geographically-close dating relationships. *College Student Journal, 28*, 212-219.
- Emmers, T.M., & Canary, D.J. (1996). The effect of uncertainty reduction strategies on young couples' relational repair and intimacy. *Communication Quarterly, 44*, 166-182.
- Euwema, M., & Van de Vliert, E. (1990). The influence of sex on managers' perception, attribution, stress and behavior in conflict with their subordinates. Paper presented at the International Association for Conflict Management, Vancouver, B.C.
- Finkenauer, C., & Hazam, H. (2000). Disclosure and secrecy in marriage: Do both contribute to marital satisfaction? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 17*, 245-263.
- Floyd, K., & Morman, M. (2000). Affection received from fathers as a predictor of men's affection with their own sons: Tests of the modeling and compensation hypothesis. *Communication Monographs, 67*, 347-361.
- Gottman, J. M. (1994). *What predicts divorce: The relationship between marital processes and marital outcomes*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Guldner, G. T., & Swenen, C. H. (1995). Time spent together and relationship quality: Long-distance relationships as a test case. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 12*, 313-320.
- Hagedoorn, M., Kuijer, R., Buunk, B., DeJong, G., & Wobbes, T. (2000). Marital satisfaction in patients of cancer: Does support from intimate partners benefit those who need it the most? *Health Psychology, 19*, 274-282.

- Holt, P., & Stone, G. (1988). Needs, coping strategies, and coping outcomes associated with long-distance relationships. *Journal of College Student Development, 29*, 136-141.
- Joseph, A., & Afifi, T. (2010). Military wives' stressful disclosures to their deployed husbands: The role of protective buffering. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 4*, 412-434.
- Kellerman, K., & Reynolds, R. (1990). When ignorance is bliss: The role of motivation to reduce uncertainty in uncertainty reduction theory. *Human Communication Research, 17*, 5-75.
- Kelley, H. H., & Thibaut, J. W. (1978). *Interpersonal relations: A theory of interdependence*. New York: Wiley.
- Knobloch, L. K., & Carpenter-Theune, K. E. (2004). Topic avoidance in developing romantic relationships: Associations with intimacy and relational uncertainty. *Communication Research, 31*, 173-205.
- Knobloch, L., Satterlee, K., & DiDomenico, S. (2010) Relational uncertainty predicting appraisals of face threat in courtship: Integrating uncertainty reduction theory and politeness theory. *Communication Research, 37*(3), 303-334.
- Knobloch, L. K., & Solomon, D. H. (1999). Measuring the sources and content of relational uncertainty. *Communication Studies, 50*, 261-278.
- Knobloch, L. K. & Solomon, D. H. (2005). Relational uncertainty and relational information processing: Questions without answers? *Communication Research, 32*, 349-388.
- Larsen, J., Urry, J., & Auxhausen, K. (2006). *Mobilities, networks, geographies*. Hampshire, UK: Ashgate.
- Maguire, K. (2007). "Will it ever end?": A (Re)examination of uncertainty in college student long-distance dating relationships. *Communication Quarterly, 55*, 415-432.
- Maguire, K., & Kinney, T. (2010). When distance is problematic: communication, coping, and relational satisfaction in female college students' long-distance dating relationships. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 38*(1), 27-46.

- Merolla, A. (2010). Relational maintenance and noncopresence reconsidered: conceptualizing geographic separation in close relationships. *Communication Theory, 20*, 169-193.
- Paul, E. L., Poole, A., & Jakubowyc, N. (1998). Intimacy development and romantic status: Implications for adjustment to the college transition. *Journal of College Student Development, 39*, 75-86.
- Peterson, D. R. (1983). Conflict. In H. H. Kelley, E. Berscheid, A. Christensen, J. H. Harvey, T. L. Huston, G. Levinger, E. McClintock, L. A. Peplau, & D. R. Peterson (Eds), *Close relationships* (pp. 360-396).
- Planalp, S., & Honeycutt, J. M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal relationships. *Human Communication Research, 11*, 593-604.
- Rusbult, C., Martz, J., & Agnew, C. (1998). The investment model scale: Measuring commitment level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships, 5*, 357-391.
- Sahlstein, E. (2004). Relating at a distance: Negotiating being together and being apart in long distance relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*, 689-710.
- Sahlstein, E. (2006). Making plans: Praxis strategies for negotiating uncertainty-certainty in long-distance relationships. *Western Journal of Communication, 70* 147-165.
- Smyth, J. & Pennebaker, J. (2001). What are the health effects of disclosure? In A. Baum, T. Tevenson, & J. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of health psychology* (pp. 339-348). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Solomon, D. H., & Knobloch, L. K. (2004). A model of relational turbulence: The role of intimacy, relational uncertainty, and interference from partners in appraisals of irritations. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*, 795- 816.
- Stafford, L. (2010). Geographic distance and communication during courtship. *Communication Research, 37*, 276-297.
- Stafford, L., & Merolla, A.J. (2007). Idealizations, reunions, and stability in long-distance dating relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 24*, 37-54.
- Stafford, L., & Reske, J. (1990). Idealization and communication in long-distance premarital relationships. *Family Relations, 39*, 274-279.

- Straus, M., Hamby, S., Boney-McCoy, S., Sugarman, D. (1996). The revisited Conflict Tactics Scales: development and preliminary psychometric data. *Journal of Family Issues, 17*, 283-316.
- Theiss, J. A. (2005, November). *The effects of relational uncertainty and indirect communication on cognitive reactions to sexual intimacy*. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Communication Association, Boston.
- Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2006a). Coupling longitudinal data and multilevel modeling to examine the antecedents and consequences of jealousy experiences in romantic relationships: A test of the relational turbulence model. *Human Communication Research, 33*, 469-503.
- Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2006b). A relational turbulence model of communication about irritations in romantic relationships. *Communication Research, 33*, 391-418.
- U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics. (2003). U.S. business travel. Accessed February 1, 2009, at http://www.bts.gov/publications/america_on_the_go/us_business_travel/pdf/entire.pdf.
- Van Horn, K., Arnone, A., Nesbitt, K., Desilets, L., Sears, T., Griffin, M, et al. (1997). Physical distance and interpersonal characteristics in college students' romantic relationships. *Personal Relationships, 4*, 25-34.
- Vera, E. M., & Betz, N. E. (1992). Relationships of self-regard and affective self-disclosure to relationship satisfaction in college students. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*, 422-429.
- Westmyer, S.A., DiCioccio, R.L., & Rubin, R.B. (1998). Appropriateness and effectiveness of communication channels in competent interpersonal communication. *Journal of Communication, 48*, 27-48.
- Zacchilli, T., Hendrick, C., & Hendrick, S. (2009). The romantic partner conflict scale: A new scale to measure relationship conflict. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 26*, 1073-1096.