Assessment of Disharmony and Disaffection

by

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Abstract

Intimate relationship researchers' need to accurately assess conflict resolution and emotional connection has driven the development of instruments measuring disharmony and disaffection, constructs that assess these respective processes. Research on existing measures provides a basis of empirical support for disharmony and disaffection, as well as their association with relationship distress; however, these measures lack a theoretical underpinning and evidence of construct validity. The current study empirically examines a theoretically-guided higher-order model of disharmony and disaffection within a sample of students at a large, Southeastern university. The hypothesized model of both constructs was largely supported. Notably, the retained model suggests that disharmony and disaffection share a cognitive component; specifically, each includes a factor indicative of the belief that one is misunderstood and criticized by one's partner. Further, disharmony and disaffection independently contribute to lower positive relationship satisfaction, as well as higher negative relationship satisfaction. Overall, findings suggest that two distinct patterns of relationship function, each contributing to evaluations characterized by dissatisfaction.

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List of Abbreviations

CA	Conflict Avoidance
CE	Conflict Engagement
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CI	Confidence Interval
CM	Criticized and Misunderstood
CO	Compliance
COM	Compliant Conflict Behavior
CRSI	Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory
CW	Conflict Withdrawal
DA	Disaffection
DH	Disharmony
DHCog	Disharmonious Cognitions items
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis

ESCTQ	Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Questionnaire
FIML	Full Information Maximum Likelihood
GSRHQ	Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire
GTRP	Gottman Three Relationship Processes
IAT	Ineffective Arguing Inventory
KMCS	Kansas Marital Conflict Scale
LA	Low Affection
MDS	Marital Disaffection Scale
MMLCS	Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale
MPI	Marital Problems Inventory
MSI-DA	Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised--Disaffection
MSI-DH	Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised--Disharmony
MSI-R	Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Revised
NSTOT	Negative Satisfaction Total Score
PANAS-X	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form
PN-SMD	The Positive and Negative Semantic Differential
PPS	Positive Problem Solving

PSTOT	Positive Satisfaction Total Score
RBI	The Relationship Beliefs Inventory
RBI-PC	Relationship Beliefs Inventory-Partner Cannot Change Scale
RDS	Romantic Disengagement Scale
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Square Residual
STMI	Spouse Treatment Mediation Inventory
TLI	Tucker Lewis Index
UNR	Unresolved Disagreement

Romantic relationship researchers and clinicians require assessment data to understand the nature and course of couple distress (Snyder, Heyman, & Haynes, 2005). Minimally, they refer to measures that assess global appraisals of *relationship satisfaction* or *quality* (e.g., Couples Satisfaction Index; Funk & Rogge, 2007), the "final common pathway through which relationship distress emerges across couples" (Jacobson, 1985). Along with measuring relationship satisfaction, however, researchers and clinicians are also interested in supplementary assessments that target the major aspects of couple functioning, or *dyadic adjustment* (e.g., communication patterns), which contribute to and interact with evaluations of relationship satisfaction (Fincham & Rogge, 2010).

As important as measuring dyadic adjustment is in determining the antecedents of relationship distress, current measures suffer from several shortcomings. For instance, existing measures are perhaps too narrowly focused, assessing topics such as disagreement (e.g., regarding money management: Marital Problems Inventory [MPI]; Geiss & O'Leary, 1981) or specific conflict behaviors (e.g., shouting: Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Questionnaire [ESCTQ]; Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988). Additionally, there is little consensus as to how dyadic adjustment is best defined and measured. That is, existing assessments reflect the fragmentation of theory and clinical traditions over time (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Indeed, most measures of dyadic adjustment are based on implicit theories of what constitutes "good" relationship functioning (see Fincham & Bradbury, 1987). As a result, many dyadic adjustment assessments have become boutique measures – tailored for use by a small number of researchers sharing a consistent perspective – or that yield information that is difficult to interpret because it is not anchored by theory. As the numbers of such measures grow, the ability to synthesize research findings across studies diminishes (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Further,

clinicians face the impracticality of choosing from a large, disjointed set of assessments; each backed by a potentially disparate set of research findings.

Fortunately, additional research has broadened the scope of dyadic adjustment measures to include *disharmony* and *disaffection*. These constructs describe two global domains of relationship functioning which may help to succinctly characterize the processes underlying relationship dissatisfaction (Kersten, 1990; Snyder & Regts, 1982). In both cases, the emergence of chronic relationship distress occurs through ineffective communication styles (Snyder & Regts, 1982). With respect to disharmony, distress develops as overt and hostile conflict behaviors antagonize and frustrate dyad members (Herrington et al., 2008). In the case of disaffection, distress develops as the avoidance of addressing disagreements grows into emotional disengagement (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). By way of either process, the end result is unresolved conflict and global dissatisfaction. Importantly, operational definitions of these constructs are at least consistent with contemporary theories on the antecedents of relationship distress (e.g., Karney & Bradbury, 1995), and are more broadly focused than existing operations that capture only particular aspects of dyadic adjustment (e.g., disagreement: MPI; Geiss & O'Leary, 1981). Thus, disharmony and disaffection provide an opportunity to sample behavioral patterns broadly and in key theoretical areas, allowing for both practical and meaningful assessment of relationship functioning.

Available evidence supports the overall construct validity of disharmony and disaffection (Herrington et al., 2008; Kayser, 1996; Snyder & Regts, 1982). For instance, chronic unresolved disagreement – one of the components of disharmony – is a primary contributor to relationship distress and negatively impacts relationship satisfaction longitudinally (Fincham, 2003; Lawrence et al., 2009). Additionally, researchers have recently reconsidered the importance of

emotional affection and its' opposite (i.e., disaffection) by showing that expressing affection positively associates with changes in relationship satisfaction over time (Fincham, Stanley, & Beach, 2007; Huston & Vangelisti, 1991). Taken together, these findings suggest that disharmony and disaffection have potential to fill a gap in the literature by providing a global assessment of dyadic functioning – one that may more accurately depict the association between relationship satisfaction and broad interactional styles.

Although such findings on disharmony and disaffection are encouraging, a conceptual basis is needed to guide interpretation (Nunnally, 1978, p. 107). Moreover, the lack of explicit and theoretically-grounded measurement models results in varied operational and conceptual definitions of each construct. For example, the constructs of disharmony and conflict behaviors have been conflated, that is, a sub-component is treated as the overall process. A similar phenomenon occurs with disaffection and its potentially constituent factors including love, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008; Herrington et al., 2008). That there exists some level of support for these operations may suggest that disharmony and disaffection are better characterized as a set of associated factors. The foregoing section provides a quantitative evaluation of existing measures in order to extract underlying themes in the conceptualization of disharmony and disaffection. From that basis, we propose a tentative model for each construct that is at least consistent with available theory and empirical evidence.

Existing Definitions of Disharmony

Disharmony has been described in terms of *overt conflict* or, alternatively, *hostile conflict* (Herrington et al., 2008; Snyder & Regts, 1982). Overt conflict occurs when an interpersonal interaction is consciously recognized as conflict by participants (Fincham & Beach, 1999).

Hostile conflict, on the other hand, represents an interaction ratio favoring negative behaviors relative to positive behaviors during problem-related communication (Gottman, 1993). Although overt and hostile conflicts are used interchangeably to characterize disharmony – and comprise overlapping behavioral sets – their conceptual domains contain some behaviors that are mutually exclusive. For example, hostility may not always be overt (e.g., resentment; Schill, Ramanaiah, & Conn, 1990), whereas overt conflict may not necessarily comprise hostility (e.g., non-evaluative disagreement; Zinbarg, Lee, & Yoon, 2007). Also problematic is that these current definitions do not clarify how and to what extent disharmony differs from other forms of conflict (e.g., stonewalling; Busby & Holman, 2009). Considered together, the ostensible definitions for disharmony do not adequately delineate its conceptual boundaries.

Notably, however, the existing measure of disharmony – the Marital Satisfaction Inventory-Disharmony (MSI-DH) subscale – conforms to a one-factor model (Herrington et al., 2008; Snyder & Regts, 1982). This finding suggests that the scale contains items tapping a single underlying construct or process. Yet, without clear operational bounds or theoretical guidance, what this latent construct actually represents remains difficult to discern. However, an analysis of the MSI-DH's item content (see Smith & McCarthy, 1995) suggests two critical and, when considered in tandem, distinct aspects to the construct of disharmony. First, and consistent with existing definitions; the MSI-DH assesses a class of behaviors known as *demand* or *hostile* communication. These are behaviors in which individuals approach conflict and prioritize personal goals over relationship goals (Heavey, Christensen, & Malamuth, 1995; Roberts, 2000). Examples of such items on the MSI-DH include a partner's resistance to critical feedback and a belief that one's partner aims to alter the individual's personality (Herrington et al., 2008). Second, other MSI-DH items emphasize covert *responses* to hostile, serial disagreements; such

as feeling emotionally wounded or believing that "*[m]y partner often fails to understand my point of view*…." These items are inconsistent with the definition of disharmony as comprising only particular types of overt conflict behavior, as they associate with a broader latent factor also manifesting at the cognitive-affective level.

In sum, the existing conceptual definitions and operationalization of disharmony fall short in two key areas. First, competing conceptual definitions of disharmony contain mutually exclusive behavioral descriptors with little in the way of theory to clearly support either operation. Second, the existing scale for disharmony includes items which fall outside of the scope of its purported conceptual definition, but that overlap with theoretically separate constructs (e.g., thoughts and emotions). Taken together, given that the MSI-DH conforms to a single factor (Herrington et al., 2008; Snyder & Regts, 1982), its item content suggests that disharmony may capture variability across sub-constructs of hostile/demanding conflict behavior and covert (i.e., cognitive-affective) responses to past conflict that are, in some sequence, causally related.

Existing Definitions of Disaffection

Similar to the construct of disharmony, current definitions of disaffection are also problematic. All conceptual definitions of disaffection include a core of "emotional distancing" (Gottman, 1999; Kersten, 1990; Snyder & Regts, 1982). However, some researchers consider active negative emotions to be an element of disaffection, while other definitions focus on emotional withdrawal. As a result, items include both of these content areas, focusing on having *"….a lot of angry feelings,"* as well as not feeling *"….much of anything"* about a partner (Marital Disaffection Scale [MDS], Kersten, 1990; Romantic Disengagement Scale [RDS],

Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). Factor analysis supports the distinction between engaged negative emotions and low-valence emotions (both positive and negative; Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). As is the case with disharmony, these content areas are at times mutually exclusive (e.g., being simultaneously angry and apathetic). In sum, the current literature on disaffection leaves open two paths - one in which disaffection hinges on actively negative emotion and another in which it involves passive or low-valence emotions.

The distinction between actively negative versus low-valence emotional responses has wider implications, as each may be related to a different behavior set. For example, anger – an actively negative emotion – is likely related to *angry withdrawal,* while apathy – a low-valence affective experience – may be related to *conflict avoidance.* Angry withdrawal comprises behaviors aimed at communicating negative affect through disengagement in interaction, while conflict avoidance comprises behaviors aimed at distraction from conflict through neutral or apathetic behaviors (Roberts, 2000). For instance, *"stonewalling,"* or refusing to interact during a conflict, is intended to communicate negative affect (Gottman, 1993). Changing the subject, on the other hand, is a form of distraction aimed at avoiding an exchange of negative affect. Without theory to guide the identification of a single set of "disaffected" emotional responses, the specific conflict behaviors corresponding to this construct cannot be adequately determined.

In addition to incorporating related behavior, a recent factor analysis of existing measures suggests that a cognitive compliment to disaffected reactions also exists (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). For example, the RDS includes items assessing *beliefs* that the "*partner is not the person [he or she] once… was,*" which may underscore the affective components of disaffection (e.g., disappointment). Although conceptual definitions of disaffection strongly emphasize its affective component (Kersten, 1990; Snyder & Regts, 1982), a pattern of related

behaviors and thoughts may exist alongside the underlying emotional reactions. Only with an explicit theory of disaffection in place can any association between these components be clearly interpreted.

Associations between Disharmony, Disaffection, and Other Constructs

Clarifying the association between disharmony, disaffection, and related constructs may provide discriminant validity evidence (Campbell, 1960). That is, whether or not disharmony and disaffection are empirically distinguishable from each other and their hypothesized correlates requires testing. Further, understanding the direction and magnitude of these associations may aide in placing disharmony and disaffection within the context of the larger literature on romantic relationship assessment. Thus, the current study explores two potential associates of disharmony and disaffection—unresolved disagreement and relationship satisfaction.

Disharmony, disaffection, and unresolved disagreement. Unresolved disagreement, also known as serial arguing, describes episodic recurrences of a certain disagreement during conflicts (Johnson & Roloff, 1998). Currently, one item on the MSI-DH addresses such unresolved conflict, stating "*... my partner and I... go over and over the same old things."* While disaffection scales do not directly assess unresolved disagreement, it is likely that individuals who avoid or withdraw from conflict situations will experience recurrences of similar disagreements in the future. Including items pertaining to unresolved disagreement is also consistent with the general idea that the effects of unresolved arguments compound over time, leading to decreased relationship satisfaction and reduced stability (e.g., *Enduring Dynamics Model*; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Thus, established patterns of

dysfunctional conflict behavior—present in both disharmony and disaffection—may associate with unresolved disagreements.

Disharmony, disaffection, and relationship quality. As noted previously, relationship assessments often center on evaluations of relationship satisfaction. Further, previous assessments of relationship functioning have conflated functioning and satisfaction, leading to difficulties interpreting results (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Sabatelli, 1988). It is therefore important to ensure that disharmony and disaffection assess constructs distinct from satisfaction. Once differentiated, understanding the nature and strength of the association between functioning and satisfaction will facilitate refinement of romantic relationship assessments.

Summary of Current Limitations

Existing measures of disharmony and disaffection provide a strong foundation for research; however, current measures are bounded by several limitations. First, existing definitions lack theoretical validity, as they were primarily assembled using clinical knowledge or implicit theories of relationship functioning, with some notable exceptions (e.g., Investment Model Scale; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). Pursuant to this, existing definitions do not clearly delineate why scale items are related. Without a theoretical underpinning, definitions of disharmony and disaffection do not elucidate associations between process-specific behaviors, cognitions, or emotions. Moreover, a lack of theory also contributes to conflicting views of the relationship between disharmony and disaffection. For example, Gottman (1999) conceptualized disaffection as one factor of disharmony, focusing on affective interaction as signs of each process. This model suggests that some emotions, such as anger, exist in both disharmony and disaffection. Snyder and Regts (1982), on the other hand, characterized disaffection and

disharmony as separate pathways to distress. Although certain components of disharmony and disaffection may overlap, dependent on the definitions employed, current theory fails to clarify how disharmony and disaffection inter-relate. This may result in the use and interpretation of assessments without clearly delineated boundaries. These difficulties prevent theoretical interpretation and integration of these findings within the larger relationship literature, including understanding associations with relationship satisfaction and unresolved disagreement. As such, the current study has three major aims: a) to formulate definitions of disharmony and disaffection through the lens of theory; and, based on this theory, b) to develop models for each process and test them empirically, as well as c) to explore potential links between these constructs and other established romantic relationship constructs.

An Integrated Theoretical Account

As previously noted, the application of theory will allow for clarification of the components of disharmony and disaffection and their associations with each other, and may also pave the way for more direct construct validation. Moreover—pending empirical and theoretical validation—disharmony and disaffection assessments may present an interpretable snapshot of how negative interaction processes relate to differing expressions of relationship distress. With this in mind, the first goal of the current study is to analyze existing operational and conceptual definitions of disharmony and disaffection in order to determine common and disparate elements. Below, we discuss elements of social exchange theory, approach-avoidance motivational theory, and double ABCX theory as they may apply to disharmony and disaffection.

As a relationship disagreement emerges, each dyad member must decide how to behave. Social exchange theory suggests that the individual may choose behavior by weighing the potential interpersonal rewards and costs of conflict (Karney & Bradbury, 1995). Relationship research supports this contention. Specifically, individuals adjust behavioral investment based on perceived rewards and costs, and behave in order to produce a favorable balance of interpersonal rewards and costs (and to maintain consistency with expected rewards and costs; Le & Agnew, 2003). However, all consequences may not be created equal for a given person. Approach-avoidance motivational theory suggests that some individuals are more likely to detect and be motivated by rewards, while others are cost-oriented (Elliot & Covington, 2001). Empirical evidence supports this hypothesis, as well, in regards to romantic relationships (Frank & Brandstätter, 2002; Kurdek, 2007; Laurenceau, Troy, & Carver, 2005). Specifically, in a relationship conflict, some individuals may orient toward rewards and engage in conflict to gain them, utilizing demanding behaviors during conflict. Others orient toward minimizing costs and do so by avoiding or withdrawing from conflict.

When the person judges and overtly responds to the incentives surrounding the conflict, Double ABCX theory suggests that a corresponding emotional response to the disagreement will also occur (McCubbin, Sussman, & Patterson, 1983). Research suggests that emotions follow actions to provide a barometer of a behavior's consequences (Clore, Gasper, & Gavin, 2001). In the case of disharmony, the person's demanding behaviors are met with denial of the desired reward. The resulting high-valence negative emotions disconfirm the appropriateness of the behavior. However, the person may continue fighting by escalating or altering their behavior, as they likely still wish to obtain the rewards on offer (but may lack an alternative response that is better). Positive-valence affective responses may also result, but only when the conflict

successfully resolves in the individual's favor (i.e., they obtain the sought after reward). In the case of disaffection, avoidance behaviors result in a lack of interaction, which results in the emotional response of apathy towards the relationship—no rewards are obtained and so no rewards are sought through future interaction. However, this strategy is maintained because it keeps the costs of conflict at a minimum.

In both cases, Double ABCX theory posits that unsuccessful conflict patterns will perpetuate disagreement, leading to pile-up - the accumulation of aversive events (Blau, 1986, p. 99; Hill, 1949; McCurry, Revell, & Roy, 2009). In support of this hypothesis, longitudinal studies suggest that perceptions of the relationship are shaped by ongoing disagreements (Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). Reward-oriented individuals begin to perceive both potential rewards and the high costs associated with their demand behaviors, which are either ineffective or only effective in the short-term. Enough rewards are available to make conflict seem worthwhile, but the weight of past costs begins to accumulate as well. Cost-oriented individuals perceive high conflict cost and, because of past withdrawal, have not received sufficient rewards to encourage future engagement. As these patterns solidify, Double ABCX theory posits that individuals also make cognitive appraisals related to the relationship. Those who engage in conflict unsuccessfully may begin to feel that their partner misunderstands them, while those who avoid conflict may make the appraisal that their partner will never change.

Measures of disharmony and disaffection capture these processes in medias res. A specific behavioral style (demand or avoid), emotional response (negative active or apathetic emotions), and cognitive appraisals (being misunderstood and/or the partner unable to change) become magnified as disagreements recur. When viewed from this perspective, disharmony and

disaffection seem to be separate, but related, constructs. Though they share an antecedent (disagreement) and consequence (relationship distress pursuant to unresolved conflict), they represent different connecting pathways. First, disharmonious individuals engage in active conflict behaviors, while disaffected individuals engage in passive conflict behaviors. Second, disharmonious individuals are potentially oriented towards rewards, while disaffected individuals may be more oriented toward costs. Additionally, disharmonious individuals have negative, active emotional responses, while disaffected individuals have apathetic emotional responses. Finally, disharmonious individuals primarily form the belief that they are misunderstood by their partner, while disaffected individuals more so believe that their partner is unable to change (though these thoughts may pertain somewhat to both). Ultimately, both disharmony and disaffection result in relationship distress via different intrapersonal and internal response styles.

Current Study

These relational theories, when taken together, suggest that relationship distress resulting from unresolved conflict due to certain patterns of conflict engagement (disengagement), interpersonal responding, and internal perceptions. The current study seeks to empirically test this model of disharmony and disaffection. In order to do so, we first sampled items from a range of measures tapping constructs pertinent to the overall model. Exploratory factor analyses were conducted to reduce and refine the item pool. We then used a confirmatory approach to test two overarching hypotheses. First, we predicted that the best fitting model of disharmony and disaffection will comprise two related constructs; each subsuming lower-order cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors. Specifically, disharmony will be characterized by a belief that one is misunderstood by one's partner, high-valence emotions, and active, hostile behaviors; whereas disaffection will be characterized by a belief that one's partner cannot change, low-

valence emotions, and passive-avoidant behaviors. Further, the affective indicators of disharmony (high-valence emotions) and disaffection (low-valence emotion) will be negatively related. We will also test whether the separate cognitive components of disharmony and disaffection load onto both constructs, as a reasonable case can be made for both latent determinants.

Second, disharmony and disaffection will independently associate with subjective evaluative judgments (i.e., (dis)satisfaction) with a relationship's positive and negative characteristics. Specifically, disharmony will be associated with higher negative satisfaction, while disaffection will be associated with lower positive satisfaction. In addition, disharmony will be associated with more intensity in satisfaction ratings. We also posited that unresolved conflict would mediate the association between the two adjustment domains and relationship satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

Participants were recruited through the SONA system at Auburn University. Three hundred and ninety-one individuals consented to participate in the study and 373 completed the study (i.e., filled out 90% or more of survey items), for a completion rate of approximately 95%. Due to issues related to completion time, 308 of these participants were included in the current analyses (for more information, see the Preliminary Analyses section below). The sample included in the analyses primarily comprised female, Caucasian (91%), undergraduate (94%), Christian (65%) emerging adults (M=20 years, *SD*=1.79). The majority of participants indicated that they were in a casual (37%) or serious (57%) dating relationship and were not cohabitating

(94%). Participants were compensated with extra credit hours for psychology courses and received personalized feedback regarding the quality of their romantic relationship.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire included a number of items assessing age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, education, and income. Other questions addressed aspects of the participant's current romantic relationship, including relationship type and cohabitation status.

Existing measures of disharmony and disaffection. The Marital Satisfaction Inventory—Revised (MSI-R; Snyder & Aikman, 1999) is a 150-item, nationally standardized scale designed to assess dyadic adjustment and differentiate distressed and non-distressed couples (Herrington et al., 2008). The disharmony scale includes 9 items assessing domains including conflict behavior and understanding partners' point of view, while the 10-item disaffection scale assesses avoidance behavior and emotional expression (Herrington et al., 2008). Items are traditionally scored as true or false; however, the current study utilized a standard 1-5 rating scale for all items. Higher scores indicate greater disharmony or disaffection, respectively. A confirmatory factor analysis of each scale suggests adequate internal consistency and good criterion validity (Herrington et al., 2008). The MSI-R was chosen for use in the current study because it is the only existing comprehensive assessment of disharmony and the first assessment of disaffection.

The Relationship Disengagement Scale (RDS; Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008) is an 18-item scale designed to assess behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects of disaffection. The scale was developed through theoretical and empirical examination. Items are derived from

existing disaffection and relational distancing measures, including the Emotional Disengagement and Loneliness Scale (Gottman, 1999), Marital Disaffection Scale (Kayser, 1996), and Relational Distancing Index (Hess, 2002). The scale includes three factors addressing disengagement from the relationship, low levels of positivity, and high relationship dissatisfaction. Items are scored on a 1-5 Likert-style scale, resulting in scores ranging from 18 to 90. The RDS was chosen to assess disaffection because it combines items found on earlier measures, while incorporating evidence of conceptual and empirical validity (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008).

In addition to scales designed to directly assess disharmony and disaffection, several additional measures address components of each construct. Thus, the study incorporates measures of conflict behaviors, affect during conflict, cognitions regarding the participant's partner, conflict goals, unresolved disagreements, and relationship satisfaction.

Conflict behaviors. The Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994) is a 16-item measure derived from previously explicated definitions of conflict styles. Items assess four conflict strategies: positive problem solving, conflict engagement, conflict withdrawal, and compliance. Items are rated on a 1 to 5 Likert-style scale and summing the four items in each domain generates a global composite scores. Scores on each scale range from 4-20, with higher scores indicating more conclusive endorsement of a given conflict strategy. The scale has previously demonstrated adequate internal consistency. This measure was chosen for the current study because it addresses behavioral patterns hypothesized to play a role in both disharmony (i.e., conflict engagement) and disaffection (i.e., conflict withdrawal and compliance).

The Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Questionnaire (ESCTQ; Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988) assesses the occurrence of specific conflict behaviors, ranging from hostile (i.e.,

criticism) to avoidant (i.e., denial). Participants were instructed to indicate their behaviors during the last disagreement with their romantic partners. The scale has demonstrated adequate reliability (Canary & Cupach, 1988). The current factor structure of the ESCTQ has not been borne out in past research (Zacchilli, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2009). Nevertheless, this scale was chosen because it assesses specific conflict behaviors in the context of the actor of the behavior (rather than the exchange between partners), and certain of these items may cohere better with the currently sampled alternatives.

Affective responses. The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form (PANAS-X; Watson & Clark, 1994) is a 60-item measure that allows participants to identify positive (e.g., active) and negative affective states (e.g., afraid). Affective states can be further separated into more specific dimensions (e.g., hostility, self-assurance, etc.). Instructions were written to specify feelings during the most recent disagreement with the participant's romantic partner. Each emotion word is rated on a 1 to 5 Likert-style scale. Item scores are summed into Positive Affect and Negative Affect composites, with scores ranging from 5 to 50. The PANAS-X scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency and low inter-correlation. The PANAS-X was chosen as a measure of emotion in the current study because it assesses the valence of emotions, allowing for detection of hypothesized disharmonious emotional reactions (e.g., high valence) and disaffected emotional reactions (e.g., low valence).

Cognitive responses. The Relationship Beliefs Inventory (RBI; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982) is a 40-item inventory comprising five 8-item scales that assess maladaptive relationship beliefs: (1) Disagreement is Destructive, (2) Mindreading is Expected, (3) Partners cannot Change, (4) Sexual Perfectionism, and (5) the Sexes are Different. Traditionally, each item is answered on a 1 to 6 Likert-type scale and composite scores (ranging from 8 to 48) are generated

by adding items on each scale. The current study utilizes a 1-5 Likert-style scale to assess the Partners Cannot Change scale, which applies to thoughts consistent with our definition of disaffection. Although the Partners Cannot Change scale has demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), recent analyses suggest that a 5-item measure may more closely represent the construct (James, Hunsley, & Hemsworth, 2002). Thus, the current study includes the updated 5-item measure of this construct.

Seven items assessing feeling misunderstood by one's partner were identified using qualitative coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2003). These items are drawn from the MSI-Disharmony scale, the Gottman Sound Relationship House Questionnaire (GSRHQ; Gottman, 1999), Gottman Three Relationship Processes (GTRP; Gottman, 1999), ENRICH Conflict Resolution Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993), and the Spouse Treatment Mediation Inventory (STMI; Thomas & Ager, 1991).

Unresolved disagreement. Eight items assessing serial argument were identified using qualitative coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2003). Items are drawn from the MSI, Miller Marital Locus of Control Scale (MMLCS; Miller, Lefcourt, Herbert, & Ware, 1983), Kansas Marital Conflict Scale (KMCS; Eggeman, Moxley, & Schumm, 1985), Ineffective Arguing Inventory (IAT; Kurdek, 1994), and GSRHQ (Gottman, 1999).

Relationship satisfaction. The Positive and Negative Semantic Differential (PN-SMD; Mattson, Rogge, Johnson, Davidson, & Fincham, 2012) is a 14-item inventory that independently assesses for positive relationship satisfaction and negative relationship satisfaction (7 items per dimension). Both constructs have demonstrated adequate model fit in previous

factor analytic studies (Mattson, Rogge, Johnson, Davidson, & Fincham, 2012). The current study utilizes a 1-5 Likert-style scale for this measure.

Procedure

Each participant completed disharmony and disaffection items, along with demographic items and items assessing associated constructs (i.e., relationship satisfaction and unresolved conflict) online via Auburn University's SONA system (see Appendix B for a listing of all study items, with the exception of copyrighted material). In order to complete the survey, participants reviewed an information letter and certified that they were of the age of consent (i.e., 19 or older). Consent was given by selecting "Yes." Participants next viewed items in random order to protect against order effects. At the end of the study, participants were provided with feedback about their relationship functioning. Finally, each participant viewed a debriefing screen, which contained links to websites for therapist referrals in the event of psychological distress. Participants had the option to click on a link at the bottom of the debriefing page. If they clicked on the link, they were directed to a separate Qualtrics study, into which they entered their Auburn ID for the provision of extra credit. Personalized feedback templates, as well as the debriefing screen, can be found in Appendix C.

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Before testing the factor structure of each construct, preliminary analyses were performed in order to prepare the data. The data were visually inspected for missing values and few were found; however, one case was deleted due to a large amount of missing data (i.e., only demographic information was provided). In addition, a number of participants completed the

survey either extremely quickly or over a very long period of time. In order to maximize the quality of data utilized, an analysis was performed to identify outliers on study completion time (i.e., Median +/- 2[Interquartile Range][1]). This analysis indicated that those completing the survey in more than 35 minutes should be considered outliers. Due to the relatively low median value and larger interquartile range, no outliers were identified in the lower quartile. Pilot data on survey completion time, however, suggested that those participants completing the survey in less than 10 minutes should also be excluded. Using these time completion criteria (between 10-35 minutes), a total of 308 cases were retained for use in further analyses.

Other univariate outliers were then identified and their influence was reduced by "bringing them to the fence," or reducing their values to the maximum value of a non-outlier (Osborne & Overbay, 2004). Mahalanobis distances were then produced and examined for disharmony and disaffection cognitions, behaviors, and affect; as well as positive and negative satisfaction (Rousseeuw & Zomeren, 1990). Three cases with unusually large Mahalanobis distances were deleted. Skew and kurtosis was next examined and a transformation was applied to three variables to correct for positive skew and kurtosis. One indicator of negative satisfaction, endorsement of feeling miserable, was deleted due to large positive skew and kurtosis which could not be adequately addressed by applying a transformation. In addition, the decision was made to use MLR in confirmatory analyses to protect against any undue influence of non-normal distributions on model fit.

[1] Traditionally, univariate outliers are identified using the sample mean and standard deviation; however, these statistics are themselves influenced by the values of outliers. Utilizing the median and interquartile range provides an alternative method of detecting outliers, which is independent from the values of those outliers.

Among the remaining participants and variables, there was a very small percentage of missing data (i.e., <5%) for variables central to the current model. Missing values were replaced using the Full Information Maximum Likelihood procedure, which has demonstrated superiority over other procedures when applied to latent models (FIML; Enders & Bandalos, 2001). Prior to conducting analyses, several variables were also reverse-coded in order to facilitate meaningful analyses. Following the initial data cleaning, descriptive statistics for the central measures were generated (see Table 1, Appendix A).

Exploratory Factor Analyses

With the cleaned dataset, an iterative model-building approach was used to reduce the dataset and identify meaningful factors. First, three exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) were performed: two to identify indicator clusters for disharmony and disaffection, and a third to explore the potential higher-order structure of those indicator clusters. Following this process, the factor structure of the remaining indicators was examined for each construct. For all of the EFAs, factors were specified as oblique and the promax rotation was used.

Disharmony lower-order EFA. When hypothesized disharmony indicators were subjected to an EFA, nine factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 were identified, suggesting that they may significantly account for response variability (eigenvalues ranged from 1.10 to 11.69; Kaiser-Guttman rule; Guttman, 1954). Examination of a scree plot of the eigenvalues indicated an "elbow" between factors 1and 2, suggesting that one factor accounted for most of the variability in the model. However, parallel analysis (Horn, 1965) suggested that up to three meaningful factors could be extracted. Due to the divergence between the scree plot (which suggested one primary factor), the parallel analysis (which suggested three factors), and the

eigenvalues (which suggested up to eleven factors), we decided to take a liberal approach to factor retention at this stage of the analysis. Several factors were eliminated if because they were poorly defined (i.e., if they contained only a few indicators). At the item level, we omitted indicators with communalities less than 0.40 or without a clear factor loading (i.e., one or more loadings double the magnitude of other loadings).

Additional analysis suggested the presence of approximately four well-defined disharmony factors. The first factor represents relationship beliefs; specifically, beliefs that the respondent is misunderstood and criticized by her partner (i.e., "*I feel criticized and misunderstood when we discuss our hot topics*.") The second factor comprises items indicative of a hostile, engaging conflict style (i.e., "*Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant*"); while factor three represents negative, active emotional responses to conflict (i.e., feeling "*irritable*," "*angry*," and "*upset*"). The fourth factor includes items indicative of a both partner blaming and actively hostile conflict behaviors (i.e., "*I blamed him/her for causing the conflict*.")

Disaffection lower-order EFA. With respect to disaffection, eleven factors obtained eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 (ranging from 1.03 to 10.24). Similar to the disharmony EFA, the scree plot suggested retention of one factor, while the parallel analysis suggested that 5 factors could be meaningfully retained. Because of the discrepancy between these two results, we examined communalities and factor loadings using the same criterion as listed in the previous section. Overall, the revised EFA was suggestive of a four factor model for disaffection. Factor one largely indicates "negative symptoms", or a belief that the relationship lacks positive experiences (i.e., "*I believe our relationship is reasonably happy*" [reverse coded]). Factors two and three are indicative of recent conflict withdrawal behaviors (i.e., "*I changed the topic of*

discussion") and an overall style of conflict avoidance (i.e., "*Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue*"). Factor four reflects an experience of inhibited affect with respect to one's partner (i.e., feeling "*tired*," "*sleepy*," and "*drowsy*").

Combined exploratory analyses. In addition to examining disharmony and disaffection in separate EFAs, it was important for several reasons to examine the variability of all indicators simultaneously. First, it is possible that factor formation was driven by variance between measures, rather than true variance between indicators across measures. By adding in indicators from the same measure, but theorized to load onto a different construct, the impact of measurement variance can be somewhat differentiated from more meaningful associations between indicators. Additionally, some researchers have argued that aspects of disharmony and disaffection may share certain characteristics, such as negative affectivity. Thus, it is important to test for indicators or factors which may be associated with both constructs (i.e., cross-load). Further, it is also possible that disharmony and disaffection actually comprise a single construct. Therefore, lower-order and higher-order EFAs were conducted. These EFAs included all indicators retained by the previous, separate analyses on disharmony and disaffection. The lower-order combined EFA produced factors similar to those in the initial EFAs. Several indicators which had previously loaded onto multiple factors now conformed to a single factor (for example, "*My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences*."). When this model was examined, there were eight factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0 (eigenvalues ranged from 1.11 to 11.78), although the first two factors were the largest and accounted for 35% of the variance.

When the factor scores for these eight lower-order factors were subjected to a higher-order EFA, the analysis yielded two overarching factors, which accounted for 42% and 16% of

the variance, respectively. Further, lower-order factors largely conformed to structural hypotheses, with disaffection factors loading on one higher-order factor and disharmony factors loading onto the other higher-order factor. However, one factor (feeling criticized and misunderstood by one's partner) was associated with both latent constructs. Another of the lower-order factors, which contained items describing inhibited affect, did not load substantially onto either higher-order factor.

The findings that indicators and lower-order factors primarily load onto one higher-order factor (or the other) suggest that disharmony and disaffection may be distinct constructs. Additionally, the one cross-loading lower-order factor suggests that aspects of feeling criticized and misunderstood are explained, in part, by the higher-order disharmony and disaffection factors. Table 2 (see Appendix A) displays lower- and higher-order factor loadings from the combined EFA. In summary, the series of EFAs performed suggest that approximately seven lower-order factors contribute to higher-order factors consistent with the hypothesized constructs of disharmony (anchored primarily by hostile conflict) and disaffection (anchored primary on low affection).

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

The EFAs provided a blueprint for a hierarchical latent factor model of disharmony and disaffection. This model was first specified separately for disharmony and disaffection in order to provide maximum power and to examine each construct in its own right. MPLUS was used for all analyses (Muthen & Muthen, 2011). Several items with shared measurement variance (i.e., items from the same measure with similar wording and content) were specified as correlated. In addition, absolute model fit was examined with reference to the χ^2 to *df* ratio, in

order to account for the influence of the larger sample size on Type II errors (with ratios less than three considered an indicator of good fit; Hoe, 2008).

The fit of the higher-order disaffection model was first examined and was found to be acceptable after making several minor theory-based re-specifications[2] (best chi-square=580.20, df=366, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=1.59$; RMSEA estimate=0.04, CI[0.04, 0.05]; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.05). Similarly, the confirmatory disharmony model also obtained adequate fit after making several small re-specifications (best chi-square=417.42, df=266, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=1.57$; RMSEA estimate=0.04, CI[0.04, 0.05]; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.06).

The next step in the model-building process was to examine a confirmatory model containing both disharmony and disaffection. In the combined model, disharmony and disaffection were specified as correlated. Although the CFI value was marginally sub-threshold (with .95 being the current criteria; see Kline, 2010); the results for the model overall suggested an adequate fit (best chi-square=1922.19, df=1300, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=1.48$; RMSEA estimate=0.04, CI[0.04, 0.04]; CFI=0.93; SRMR=0.06). The specific findings were largely consistent with the hypothesized latent structure of disharmony and disaffection. The lower-order constructs associated with disaffection included low affection, recent conflict withdrawal behaviors, and a pattern of conflict avoidance. Similarly, disharmony contained lower-order constructs associated with actively negative affect, hostile conflict behaviors, and a pattern of conflict engagement. In addition, both higher-order constructs contain a lower-order factor descriptive of believing that

[2] Re-specifications were made with regard to the hypothesized theoretical model. Specifically, indicator disturbances were only correlated in the case that these indicators either contained overlapping content (e.g., feeling "*upset*" and "*angry*") or have been considered as connected experiences in the romantic relationship literature (e.g., feeling "*hostile*" and "*exploding and getting out of control*").

one's partner criticizes and does not understand the individual. Further, disharmony and disaffection appeared to be strongly associated constructs (estimate=0.64, $p<0.001$).

Following these analyses, the construct of unresolved conflict was specified as a correlate of both disharmony and disaffection. However, the correlation between disaffection and unresolved conflict was very high (estimate=0.88), suggesting that unresolved conflict may be more accurately described as a lower-order factor of disaffection. To this end, a new exploratory factor analysis of disaffection indicators, along with indicators of unresolved conflict, was conducted. These analyses suggested that unresolved conflict formed a fifth lower-order disaffection factor, accounting for approximately 9% of indicator variance. This factor additionally had a strong loading onto the higher-order construct of disaffection (estimate=0.85). Due to these findings, unresolved conflict was re-specified in the confirmatory model as a lower-order factor of disaffection. This expanded model of disharmony and disaffection demonstrated adequate model fit (chi-square=1922.19, df=1300, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=1.48$; RMSEA estimate=0.04, CI[0.04, 0.04]; CFI=0.93; SRMR=0.06) and was retained as the final model (see Table 3 in Appendix A for indicator and factor loadings).

Additional analyses. Following the establishment of a confirmatory model of disharmony and disaffection, additional analyses were performed to gather evidence of discriminant validity. Disharmony and disaffection were first examined in the context of positive and negative relationship satisfaction. In order to examine positive and negative relationship satisfaction, total scores for each scale were calculated by summing the item values. The resulting model demonstrated good fit (chi-square=2109.07, df=1401, $p<0.001$, $\chi^2/df=1.51$; RMSEA estimate=0.04, 90% CI [0.04, 0.04]; CFI=0.92; SRMR=0.06; see Figure 1). Within this model, positive satisfaction was negatively related to both disharmony and disaffection

(estimates=-1.47 and -2.05, respectively; p's<0.001). In addition, the low affection factor, which contains items assessing general relationship function, was independently associated with positive satisfaction (estimate=-1.19; p<0.001). Disharmony and disaffection were each significantly associated with higher negative satisfaction (estimates=0.93 and 1.27, respectively; p's<0.001).

We also explored whether disharmony and disaffection would differentially associate with the degree of ambivalence (versus indifference) about the relationship. In order to assess ambivalence-indifference, polarity (POL) and total affect (TA) scores were derived from the satisfaction scales (see Kaplan, 1972; see also Mattson et al., 2012). Polarity indicates the degree of difference between positive and negative satisfaction endorsements, while total affect represents the sum of both positive and negative satisfaction[3]. The difference between total affect and polarity (i.e., TA-POL) indicates the extent of ambivalence or indifference present – that is, some attitudinal response toward the relationship is present, but not uniquely positive or negative in valence. When ambivalence and polarity were included in the confirmatory model, the model demonstrated adequate fit (chi-square=2086.18, df=1400, p<0.001, χ^2/df=1.49; RMSEA estimate=0.04, 90% CI[0.04, 0.04]; CFI=0.92; SRMR=0.06; see Figure 2). Within this model, polarity was significantly and positively predictive of ambivalence scores (estimate=-0.83, p<0.001); this association was expected based on the method of calculating ambivalence. In addition, disaffection was negatively associated with polarity (estimate=-0.73, p<0.001) but only trending toward a positive association with ambivalence (estimate=-0.10, p=0.05). The low

[3] For example, an individual rating positive satisfaction 6/7 and negative satisfaction 1/7 would have a polarity score of 6-1, or 5. An individual rating positive and negative satisfaction both 4/7 would have a polarity score of 0. These scores, when considered in the context of rating intensity (as indicated by total affect), suggest the degree of ambivalence or indifference about the qualities of the relationship.

affection lower-order factor of disaffection was independently associated with polarity (estimate=-0.39, $p<0.001$) and ambivalence (estimate=-0.13, $p=0.03$). Disharmony was negatively associated with polarity (estimate=-0.45, $p<0.001$) and positively associated with ambivalence (estimate=0.13, $p=0.03$). This latter finding may reflect that conflict surrounds positively evaluated components of the relationship that are tied to conflict (and, therefore, also negatively evaluated). In general these findings suggest that the separate processes of disharmony and disaffection variously associate with different relationship attitudes that are indicative of distress.

Discussion

The overarching goal of the current study was to enhance the assessment of relationship health by better understanding specific patterns of relationship dysfunction and how they may associate with unresolved disagreement and evaluative judgments of the relationship. Many existing assessments have tended to focus on either a narrow band of topics or argue for general clinical utility. The current study aimed to strike a balance between general utility and meaningful specificity by exploring the assessment of disharmony and disaffection. These hypothesized latent constructs comprise patterns of conflict behaviors and perceptions, as well as extra-conflict factors – factors that are both fairly broad and particularly salient to relationship distress (Karney & Bradbury, 1995) – that may have utility for clinical assessment.

Although previous research provides some empirical support for the existence and nature of disharmony and disaffection, the multiplicity of conceptualizations makes integration of findings difficult. To address this issue, the current study applied exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis to theorized indicators of disharmony and disaffection. Results of exploratory

and confirmatory factor analyses largely supported the hypothesized model. The final model contains two higher-order factors consistent with the hypothesized constructs of disaffection and disharmony. The lower-order factors contained within each construct also generally conformed to hypotheses regarding associated patterns of conflict behavior, conflict-related affect, and relationship cognitions.

However, the retained model differs from the hypothesized model in several important respects. First, the final model includes one lower-order factor (feeling criticized and misunderstood by one's partner), which loads onto both higher-order factors. In addition, the construct of unresolved conflict had an unexpectedly close association with disaffection, leading to its' inclusion as a factor of the higher-order construct. Within the lower-order factors themselves, the indicators which were retained provide specific insights into the nature of the cognitions, behaviors, and affective experiences characteristic of disharmony and disaffection. Below, each of these significant findings is discussed, along with a review of the associations between satisfaction and disharmony and disaffection.

Conflict Cognitions

One lower-order factor – feeling criticized and misunderstood – loaded across the higher-order constructs of disharmony and disaffection, emphasizing its importance to both relational processes. Indicators on this factor are largely derived from the MSI-R's Disharmony index, along with several items pulled from diverse scales in order to assess feeling criticized and misunderstood. We originally hypothesized that this factor would characterize the cognitive style associated with disharmony, as hostile conflict behaviors created distance and lessened the ability of partners to successfully communicate. When considering other disaffection indicators,

however, a theoretical link between feeling criticized and misunderstood and being disaffected emerges. Specifically, approach-avoidance motivation theory posits that some individuals will be oriented towards avoiding costs of conflict (Elliot & Covington, 2001). If this is in fact the case for disaffected individuals, they may perceive being criticized and misunderstood as the salient and highly aversive cost of engaging in conflict. That is, the belief that they are misunderstood and criticized in the context of conflict may drive conflict avoidance behaviors. These findings are supported by research in couples' conflict interactions, which suggests that partner demand (i.e., criticism) is often met by actor withdrawal (i.e., avoidance; Christensen & Heavey, 1990). The current study extends this idea by indicating the importance of the evaluative component during this process, wherein the actor *perceives* her partner as criticizing and misunderstanding her.

Another conflict-related cognition also appears to contribute to disaffection, though not in the ways originally hypothesized. The unresolved conflict factor, originally thought to be a correlate of disharmony and disaffection, is instead a factor of disaffection. This factor may sum up the disaffected individual's perception of conflict outcomes. Specifically, that conflicts have no resolution and core arguments will therefore recur (e.g., "*Our arguments are left hanging and unresolved*" and "*The same problems keep coming up again and again in our relationship*"). This factor is consistent with previous findings that the perception that conflicts are unresolvable is strongly linked to repetitive, non-optimal conflict behaviors (Turk & Monahan, 1999). The presence of both the feeling criticized/misunderstood and unresolved conflict factors within disaffection bolster the claims of some past researchers, who argued that disaffection included an element of negativity (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008; Kersten, 1990). Taken together, these factors provide more support for the notion that negative affectivity may not generalize to the

whole relationship; rather, negativity in disaffection may stem from frustration related to feeling unable to successfully communicate needs.

In addition, the lack of a strong link between disharmony and unresolved conflict suggests something equally important about this construct. Specifically, this finding brings forward the possibility that hostile conflict engagement can, at times, result in receiving relational rewards, causing the behavior to perpetuate (as discussed in relation to Double ABCX theory; Clore, Gasper, & Gavin, 2001). Thus, the conflict engagement characteristic of disharmony appears to result in some negative cognitive consequences (i.e., feeling criticized or misunderstood); however, these behaviors may continue if they lead to successful conflict resolution or intrapersonal reinforcement (e.g., a sense of control or power; May, 1972). Although past research has supported the idea that conflict management behaviors can facilitate positive outcomes (such as intimacy; Sanderson & Karetsky, 2002), less is known about potential relational or intrapersonal reinforcement for hostile conflict engagement.

While other cognition-related factors unexpectedly loaded onto disaffection, the cognitive indicators originally hypothesized to contribute to disaffection were not retained. Specifically, it was originally hypothesized that disaffected individuals may withdraw from conflict because they believed that their partner could not, or would not, be able to change (as in Double ABCX theory; Rusbult, 1983). There are several potential reasons for the lack of connection between these indicators and disaffection. First, it is possible that the chosen items failed to accurately represent the construct. Indeed, a previous study of the scale from which the indicators were derived cast doubt on the psychometric validity of this index (James, Hunsley, & Hemsworth, 2002). However, it is also possible that these findings suggest a more substantive re-interpretation of disaffection. The Partners Cannot Change scale items are the only indicators

which have a distinctive future orientation. For example, a characteristic item on this scale reads "*I do not expect my partner to be able to change*." The previously mentioned cognitive factors primarily contain items concerning an evaluation of past behaviors. Thus, one potential interpretation of these results is that disharmony and disaffection are unrelated to expectations concerning future partner behavior. Expanding this idea further, it is also possible that individuals, while cognizant of current dysfunction, have hope for improvement in relational patterns (e.g., "*My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences*"). The grounds for hope, while potentially orthogonal to relationship dysfunction, may instead relate to other contemporaneous aspects of the relationship that are functioning well (McNulty & Karney, 2004).

Conflict Behaviors

The final model of disaffection and disharmony contains four factors consistent with the conflict styles and specific behaviors hypothesized to represent both constructs. Two lower-order conflict behavior factors loaded onto disaffection and these, as hypothesized, described both specific and general avoidance or withdrawal strategies. The conflict withdrawal behaviors factor includes indicators of either avoiding conflict completely—"*I tried to postpone the issue as long as possible*"—or withdrawal during an occurring conflict (e.g., "*Not being willing to stick up for myself*"). The findings thus support the inclusion of disaffection indicators which assess both conflict avoidance and angry withdrawal. The two lower-order conflict behavior factors that loaded onto disharmony, on the other hand, describe both specific instances and a general pattern of "*getting carried away*" and "*show[ing] that I lost my temper*." The disharmony results thus tend to support the inclusion of hostile, overt conflict indicators. Together, these findings are largely in line with previous accounts that disaffection's emotional

distancing and disharmony's antagonization emanate from distinctly different conflict approaches (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008; Herrington et al., 2008).

More subtly, the indicators found on these scales add to the specific understanding of the nature of such conflict patterns. Namely, the conflict pattern factors hint at impulse-control issues potentially related to approach-avoidance motivation. For example, disharmony behavior patterns are characterized by dishinhibition (e.g., "*Exploding and getting out of control*;" "*Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant*."). Disaffection behavior patterns, on the other hand, are characterized by seeming over-inhibition or rigidity (e.g., "*Being too compliant*;" "*Not being willing to stick up for myself*.") With these indicators in mind, it is possible that one aspect of approach-avoidance motivation is that the reward/approach orientation is connected with disinhibition, while cost or avoidance orientation results in over-inhibition. However, this possibility hinges on the applicability of the ABCX model to the current findings: we did not include explicit measures of reward- and cost-orientation, so the aspect of the model awaits verification. If verified, such findings would support the extension of disinhibition models associated with interpersonal violence (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996) to non-violent hostile conflict interactions.

Conflict-Driven Affect

The confirmatory model partially supported hypotheses regarding conflict-related affect. With regard to disharmony, hypotheses were confirmed—one lower-order factor describes an experience of active, negative emotions (e.g., "*distressed*," "*hostile*," and "*angry*"). The original model of disaffection, however, posited that both immediate emotional responses to conflict (as assessed by the PANAS-X) and accumulated affective reactions (as assessed by the MSI-DA)

would contribute to the experience of disaffection. In fact, previous theory placed emotional distance as the core of disaffection (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008), but as a peripheral aspect of disharmony (Herrington et al., 2008). It is therefore significant that none of the PANAS-X items were retained in the final model of disaffection, but were retained for disharmony.

This pattern of findings suggests that immediate affective responses to conflict may have links to the longer-term development of disharmony, but not to disaffection. In terms of disharmony, of-the-moment affect potentially shapes the disinhibited conflict behaviors that occur (Clore, Gasper, & Gavin, 2001). Because disaffection entails conflict withdrawal and avoidance, fleeting emotions may be less impactful. Instead, it may be that the felt relational experience shapes disaffection (consistent with long-term emotional distancing; Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). Thus, disaffection may serve as the expression of failure to cultivate "we-ness," an emotional bonding that predicts positive relationship satisfaction within dating relationships (Flora & Segrin, 2000). The indicators on the low affection factor illustrate this aspect of disaffection, describing experiences of both (a) low warmth (e.g., "*love and affection*") and (b) low connection. Taken together, the affective factors for disharmony and disaffection suggest decidedly different emotional processes at play. In the case of disharmony, the key affective process occurs during conflict. For disaffection, the affective process may unfold over time and is potentially more related to lost love or interpersonal connection than to negative conflict exchanges.

Disaffection, Disharmony, and Relationship Satisfaction

Discriminant validity analyses were conducted to differentiate each latent construct on the basis of relationship satisfaction profiles. First, it was hypothesized that disharmony, due to

its' ties to negative conflict behaviors, would result in higher negative satisfaction. On the other hand, disaffection was posited to associate with lower positive satisfaction, due to its' core of emotional distancing. Findings suggested significant links between disharmony, disaffection, and the satisfaction indices; however, they did not support specific hypotheses regarding the nature of these associations. Instead, the final model suggested that both disharmony and disaffection associate with lower positive satisfaction and higher negative satisfaction. The lower-order low affection factor of disaffection, however, was only associated with positive satisfaction. These results suggest that – although the behavioral, affective, and cognitive processes differ –these constructs result in similar types of evaluative judgments regarding the relationship overall. The current study thus supports Jacobson's (1985) conceptualization of relationship satisfaction as the "final common pathway through which relationship distress emerges across couples." However, low affection itself is related only to decreasing positive satisfaction, suggesting a more specific connection between these variables. This finding makes intuitive sense in that a lack of warmth and connection (i.e., low affection) is closely tied to lower positive satisfaction, but unrelated to evaluation of the relationship's negative characteristics.

It was additionally hypothesized that disharmony would associate with ambivalence, while both disharmony and disaffection would be linked to low polarity in satisfaction scores (that is, ambivalence; Kaplan, 1972). Surprisingly, disharmony and disaffection had very similar patterns of association with both polarity and ambivalence. Specifically, both constructs were associated with lower polarity and higher ambivalence. Further, the lower-order factor of disaffection, low affection, was separately associated with polarity and ambivalence. Just as disharmony and disaffection had unique but similar patterns of association with positive and

negative satisfaction, they also demonstrated ties to polarity and ambivalence. These associations suggest that both expressions of relational dysfunction may result in more mixed feelings about the relationship. Further, these findings support the idea that low affection has a unique association to the experience of ambivalence within the relationship. Results echo previous research of married couples indicating that affection and ambivalence about the relationship are key elements of relationship satisfaction (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001).

An Integrated Theoretical Model

Taken as a whole, the final confirmatory model suggests the presence of two primary latent constructs—disharmony and disaffection. These constructs, in turn, are associated with satisfaction as defined bi-dimensionally and in terms of ambivalence. Interpreted through its' factors, disaffection may be understood as the expression of avoidant conflict style, perceptions of recurring conflict, and low endorsement of positive experience and feelings. It essentially represents low positivity or disconnection. Disharmony, on the other hand, represents the convergence of hostile conflict styles and actively negative affective responses to conflict. Both disharmony and disaffection share a component of relationship-related cognitions, in which the individual feels that his partner criticizes and misunderstands him. While these factors stray somewhat from the originally hypothesized model, they fit well into the theoretical frameworks of social exchange theory, approach-avoidance motivation theory, and Double ABCX theory. For example, approach-avoidance motivation and social exchange theories posit that some individuals will be motivated to avoid conflict and others to approach it, thus shaping conflict behavior styles (Elliot & Covington, 2001). Study findings are consistent with this theory, showing that each construct contains a tendency towards either conflict engagement or

avoidance. For disaffection specifically, the avoidance of conflict appears to perpetuate it, as untouched core topics continue to be unresolved. Notably, the disharmony and disaffection constructs were highly correlated; suggesting that both sets of processes may be simultaneously present in a relationship. This may further suggest that approach-avoidance motivations are less characterological, but potentially correspond to different aspects of the relationship. In any case, specific kinds of affective responses accompany these conflict styles (McCubbin, Sussman, & Patterson, 1983). In the instance of disharmony, immediate affective responses predominate and consist of active, negative emotions, such as anger and irritability. In disaffection, however, immediate affective responses have less sway, perhaps because conflict-related emotions are avoided along with the conflict itself. For disaffection, then, long-term affective orientation towards ones partner has a larger influence.

In addition to conflict behavior patterns and their affective consequences, disaffection and disharmony include the same core cognitive belief. Namely, they share the belief that one's partner is critical and doesn't understand the individual. This component is consistent with the concept of "pile-up," or that the repetition of aversive relational experiences has an accompanying build-up in negative relational beliefs (McCurry, Revell, & Roy, 2009). While the current study relies on cross-sectional data (and we therefore cannot make claims about causality), it is possible that the lower-order conflict factors influence each other through a cycle of negative reinforcement.

As an example, imagine the prototypic disaffected individual. During a conflict, he does not share his point of view with his partner, instead engaging in avoidance or distraction behaviors. As a result, the conflict remains unresolved and recurs at a later time point. Frustrated that his partner brings up the same points as during the last conflict, he begins to

believe that his partner doesn't understand him and is "just critical." This belief leads him to withdraw from the argument; which then recurs at a later time. As the cycle continues, beliefs and behavior patterns solidify. Distance and disconnection begin to define the romantic relationship, and the disaffected individual becomes less interested in engaging in positive shared activities. As a result, warmth and connectedness decrease. By comparison, a prototypic disharmonious individual may over-engage in hostility during conflict, leading to a mix of conflict resolution and negative affective responses. Over time, the inconsistent conflict resolution pattern leads him to believe that his partner just "doesn't get me." This belief causes him to intensify his conflict behaviors, which have sometimes been successful in the past. Thus, both cycles are perpetuated over time.

Limitations

The current study has several limitations. One primary limitation is that the study recruited a sample of college students from a single Southeastern university, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the majority of the participants were in dating relationships, which may be more readily dissolved when satisfaction is low or interactions are distressing. Thus, our sample may be happier or possess higher functioning than would a sample of married individuals (for a similar argument, see Mattson, Franco-Watkins, & Cunningham, 2012). Likewise, measurement development with a single data set runs the risk of tailoring the model to the sample. This does not invalidate the current findings, which specify that the proposed higher-order constructs cohere at least in one population. However, that the current model will be invariant in all ways across all samples is, of course, unlikely; and so the ways in which these processes are moderated by context and population supplies an interesting direction for additional research.

Several other methodological factors may have shaped the results of the study. First, the current study assessed individual, rather than couples-level, perceptions. It is often the case that partner behaviors impact an individual's own perceptions of the relationship (e.g., satisfaction and relationship cognitions; Knoblock & Theiss, 2010; Whisman, Uebelacker, & Weinstock, 2004). Second, the indicators of belief that one's partner can't change were taken from a scale which had demonstrated poor reliability and validity in the past. These shortcomings may have contributed to poor performance by scale items in the EFA stage of analysis, and so concluding that this component of the model is irrelevant may be premature. Additionally, all indicators were re-scaled onto the same Likert continuum. This change may have altered the meaning of some responses, as compared to meanings based on previous scales (i.e., true or false). (However, re-scaling may also have provided respondents opportunity to give more detailed responses regarding their experiences). Third, the surveys were completed online for extra credit and many were excluded from the current study due to extraordinarily short or long completion times. This pattern suggests that the other respondents may have also completed the survey in a less serious or attentive way. In any case, future investigations should alter the method of and setting for questionnaire administration. Fourth, the study is limited by its' cross-sectional nature. Both disharmony and disaffection are conceptualized as processes, in the sense that they occur within the development of the romantic relationship over time (Barry, Lawrence, & Langer, 2008). The cross-sectional study design may hide or misconstrue potential causal associations between lower-order factors. For example, hostile conflict behaviors may produce the perception that one is misunderstood and criticized. With only a snapshot of current relationship functioning, we are unable to parse these potentially complex inter-relationships that actually characterize the phenomenon of interest. Finally, we hypothesized that the variable

mediating relationship satisfaction with adjustment problems was unresolved conflict. However, other pathways are conceivable. For example, it is possible that disharmonious relationship partners communicate in dysfunctional ways regardless of whether the situation is a long-standing issue (or even a context for disagreement, for that matter).

Implications

Previous assessments of disharmony and disaffection were grounded in perceived clinical utility and diverse conceptualizations, leading to fragmentation within the research literature. This state of affairs also led to difficulty in integrating research findings, as measured were based on differing clinical and theoretical stances. The current study is a first step in addressing these issues, by examining disharmony and disaffection from both a theoretical and empirical standpoint. This study's results suggest that disaffection and disharmony exist as separate latent (albeit correlated) factors that may describe different relational processes indicative of dysfunction. Further, this study's findings suggest that each construct associates with satisfaction outcomes, though in slightly different ways.

More broadly, this study expands the literature on assessment of romantic relationship health by facilitating a more clear understanding of two trajectories towards dysfunction—disaffection and disharmony. Understanding the nature of, and inter-relations between patterns of conflict cognitions and behaviors, as well as lack of positive shared experience, creates new opportunities in the realms of both research and intervention. Specifically, delineating the development of both processes over time, and alongside the development of relationship dissatisfaction, may help to further understand the developmental trajectory of relationship distress. In addition, researchers may wish to explore in more depth the individual components

of each construct. For example, understanding the potential causal connections between avoidant conflict behavior, unresolved conflict, and the development of ambivalence may clarify the links between disaffection components. Further exploring potential longer-term effects of disharmony's affective responses in shaping relational cognitions may also be fruitful. With regard to disaffection, it may be important to examine the potential contributions of other positive relational experiences (e.g., love, commitment, and intimacy) to shaping disaffection. Expanding on this theme, it may also be helpful to explore how each process leads to the belief that one's partner is critical and misunderstands the individual, and what this link may mean for the overlap between disharmony and disaffection.

In addition to research applications, future work may wish to explore the clinical utility of assessments of disaffection and disharmony. This model meshes especially well with a Cognitive-Behavioral therapy framework. It could potentially be useful for choosing specific interventions for those high in disaffection. For example, a clinician may utilize cognitive restructuring to address the belief that one's partner criticizes and misunderstands. Behavioral activation might be used to increase positive experiences of warmth and connectedness. In general, the assessment would allow for the development of a more focused intervention for the kind of relationship distress expressed by the individual, whether it is disharmonious or disaffected.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Primary Measures

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
RDS	27.90	8.47	17.00, 51.00
PANAS-X			
Positive Affect	22.41	5.94	11.00, 42.00
Negative Affect	21.63	6.20	10.00, 40.00
CRSI			
CE	7.30	2.87	4.00, 16.00
PPS	15.36	2.64	8.00, 20.00
CW	8.46	3.29	4.00, 16.00
CO	7.63	3.16	4.00, 16.00
ESCTQ			
Hostile Behaviors	15.92	5.21	9.00, 33.10
Withdrawal Behaviors	15.40	4.64	10.00, 30.00
RBI-PC	10.99	2.49	5.00,18.00
DHCog	8.15	2.46	4.00, 13.00
MSI			
DA	18.52	5.98	10.00, 37.00
DH	24.51	6.42	10.00, 40.00
Relationship Satisfaction			
Positive Satisfaction	38.52	8.85	11.00, 49.00
Negative Satisfaction	4.82	5.28	0.00, 21.01
Unresolved Conflict	17.15	6.71	8.00, 34.00

Note. RDS=Relationship Disengagement Scale; PANAS=Positive and Negative Affect Schedule; CRSI=Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory; CE=Conflict Engagement; PPS=Positive Problem Solving; CW=Conflict Withdrawal; CO=Compliance; ESCTQ=Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Questionnaire; RBI-PC=Relationship Beliefs Inventory-Partner Cannot Change Scale; DHCog=Disharmonious Cognitions items; MSI=Marital Satisfaction Inventory; DA=Disaffection; DH=Disharmony.

Table 2

Lower- and higher-order EFA indicator and factor loadings

Factor and indicators	EFA Loadings
Criticized and misunderstood	
My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences.	0.44
When we argue, my partner and I often seem to go over and over the same old things.	0.54
MSI-DH5	0.71
MSI-DH7	0.62
MSI-DH8	0.67
My partner often fails to understand my point of view on things.	0.89
I feel criticized and misunderstood when we discuss our hot topics.	0.67
I feel misunderstood by my partner.	0.65
When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me. (reverse)	0.62
Affective disharmony	
Distressed	0.65
Hostile	0.51
Scornful	0.49
Irritable	0.59
Upset	0.87
Angry	0.89
Conflict engagement pattern	
Launching personal attacks.	0.67
Exploding and getting out of control.	0.80
Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.	0.82
Throwing insults and digs.	0.88
I showed that I lost my temper.	0.35
Hostile conflict behaviors	
I criticized an aspect of his/her personality.	0.59
I shouted at him/her.	0.45
I blamed him/her for causing the conflict.	0.74
I criticized his/her behavior.	0.86
I tried to intimidate him/her.	0.50
Low affection	

MSI-DA1	0.78
There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our relationship. (reverse)	0.92
MSI-DA3	0.85
MSI-DA4	0.80
My partner and I are happier than most of the couples I know. (reverse)	0.63
MSI-DA8	0.67
MSI-DA9	0.68
I believe our relationship is reasonably happy. (reverse)	0.68
I feel disappointed that my relationship with my partner is not how I once expected it to be.	0.39
I feel a great deal of love and affection for my partner. (reverse)	0.59
I enjoy spending time alone with my partner. (reverse)	0.50
Conflict avoidance pattern	
Not defending my position.	0.93
Not being willing to stick up for myself.	0.81
Being too compliant.	0.81
Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.	0.79
Conflict withdrawal behaviors	
I ignored the issue.	0.65
I tried to postpone the issue as long as possible.	0.70
I tried to change the subject.	0.72
I avoided the issue.	0.71
I changed the topic of discussion.	0.89
Disaffection	
Low affection	0.79
Criticized and misunderstood	0.39
Conflict withdrawal behaviors	0.48
Conflict avoidance pattern	0.49
Disharmony	
Criticized and misunderstood	0.57
Affective disharmony	0.75
Conflict engagement pattern	0.81
Hostile conflict behaviors	0.88

Note. All factor loadings significant at $p<0.05$. Copyrighted items are omitted; each of these indicators is noted by an italicized placeholder (e.g., "MSI-DA4").

Table 3

Indicator and Factor Loadings for Final CFA Model

Factor and indicators	CFA Loadings
Criticized and misunderstood	
My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences.	0.63
When we argue, my partner and I often seem to go over and over the same old things.	0.67
MSI-DH5	0.68
MSI-DH7	0.59
MSI-DH8	0.68
My partner often fails to understand my point of view on things.	0.76
I feel criticized and misunderstood when we discuss our hot topics.	0.68
I feel misunderstood by my partner.	0.65
When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me. (reverse)	0.62
Affective disharmony	
Distressed	0.64
Hostile	0.64
Scornful	0.64
Irritable	0.73
Upset	0.62
Angry	0.79
Conflict engagement pattern	
Launching personal attacks.	0.73
Exploding and getting out of control.	0.80
Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.	0.77
Throwing insults and digs.	0.81
I showed that I lost my temper.	0.29
Hostile conflict behaviors	
I criticized an aspect of his/her personality.	0.62
I shouted at him/her.	0.71
I blamed him/her for causing the conflict.	0.80
I criticized his/her behavior.	0.78
I tried to intimidate him/her.	0.51
I showed that I lost my temper.	0.29

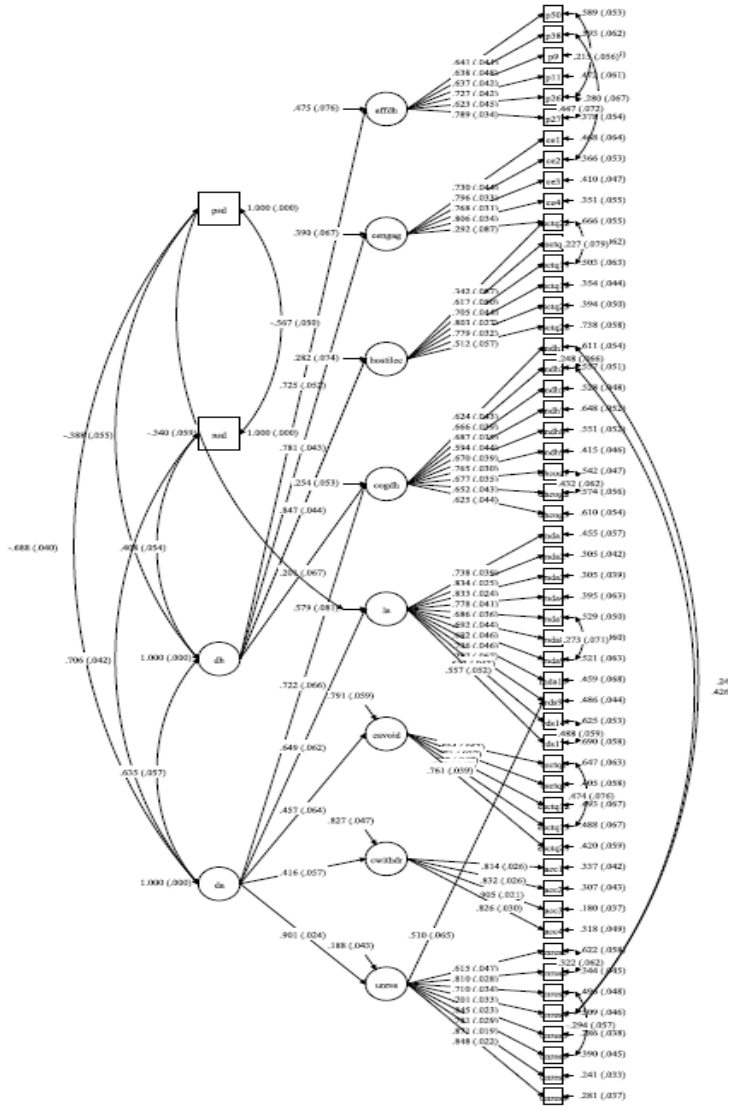
Low affection	
MSI-DA1	0.74
There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our relationship. (reverse)	0.84
MSI-DA3	0.84
MSI-DA4	0.77
MSI-DA7	0.68
MSI-DA8	0.69
MSI-DA9	0.69
I believe our relationship is reasonably happy. (reverse)	0.73
I feel disappointed that my relationship with my partner is not how I once expected it to	0.28
I feel a great deal of love and affection for my partner. (reverse)	0.61
I enjoy spending time alone with my partner. (reverse)	0.55
Conflict avoidance pattern	
Not defending my position.	0.81
Not being willing to stick up for myself.	0.83
Being too compliant.	0.91
Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.	0.83
Conflict withdrawal behaviors	
I ignored the issue.	0.60
I tried to postpone the issue as long as possible.	0.77
I tried to change the subject.	0.71
I avoided the issue.	0.72
I changed the topic of discussion.	0.76
Unresolved conflict	
When we have difficulties in our relationship there seems to be little that my partner and I are able to do to bring about a reconciliation.	0.62
After a disagreement or argument, we end up with very little resolved after all.	0.81
We go for days without settling our differences.	0.71
The same problems keep coming up again and again in our relationship.	0.70
We rarely make much progress on our central issues.	0.84
After a disagreement or an argument, I realize that the matter will have to be reargued in the near future.	0.78
Our arguments are left hanging and unresolved.	0.88
Our arguments seem to end in frustrating stalemates.	0.85
I feel disappointed that my relationship with my partner is not how I once expected it to	0.51
Disaffection	

Low affection	0.60
Criticized and misunderstood	0.73
Conflict withdrawal behaviors	0.48
Conflict avoidance pattern	0.41
Unresolved conflict	0.92
Disharmony	
Criticized and misunderstood	0.20
Affective disharmony	0.73
Conflict engagement pattern	0.78
Hostile conflict behaviors	0.85

Note. All factor loadings significant at $p<0.05$. Copyrighted items are omitted; each of these indicators is noted by an italicized placeholder (e.g., "MSI-DA4").

Figure 1

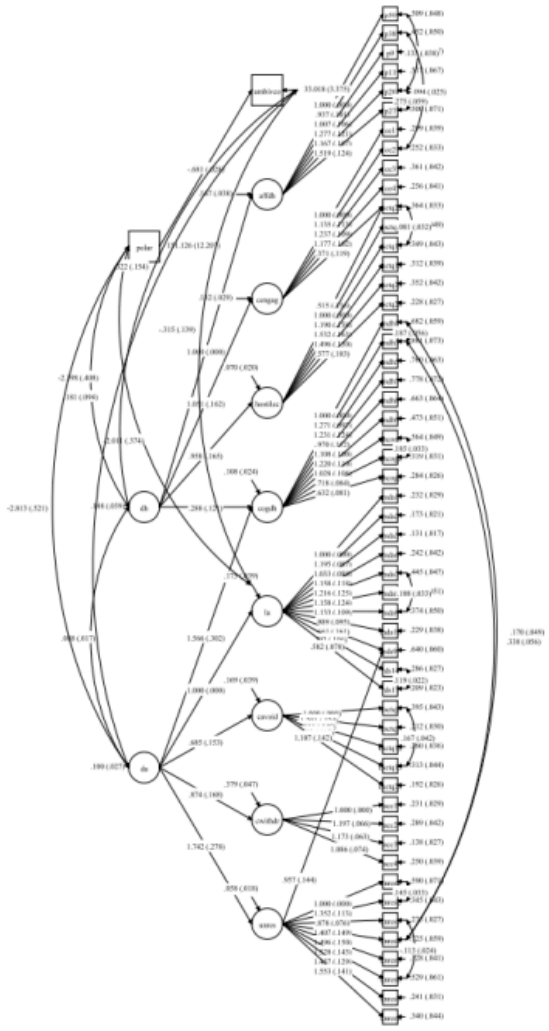
Final CFA model with Positive and Negative Satisfaction



Note. PSD=Positive Satisfaction, NSD=Negative Satisfaction, DH=disharmony, DA=disaffection, Affdh=affective disharmony, CEngag=conflict engagement pattern, HostileC=hostile conflict behaviors, Cogdh=criticized and misunderstood, LA=low affection, cavoid=conflict avoidance pattern, cwithdr=conflict withdrawal behaviors, unres=unresolved conflict.

Figure 2

Final CFA Model with Ambivalence and Polarity



Note. Polar=polarity, Ambivco=ambivalence, DH=disharmony, DA=disaffection, Affdh=affective disharmony, CEngag=conflict engagement pattern, HostileC=hostile conflict behaviors, Cogdh=criticized and misunderstood, LA=low affection, cavoid=conflict avoidance pattern, cwithdr=conflict withdrawal behaviors, unres=unresolved conflict.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your current age?____

2. What is your date of birth? (MM/DD/YYYY)____

3. How many years of education have your completed?_____

4. What educational degrees do you hold?
   - ☐ None
   - ☐ GED
   - ☐ High School Diploma
   - ☐ Associate
   - ☐ Bachelor
   - ☐ Master
   - ☐ Law (J.D.)
   - ☐ Doctorate

5. Please indicate your racial identity:
   - ☐ African American
   - ☐ Asian American
   - ☐ American Indian
   - ☐ Latino/a
   - ☐ Middle Eastern
   - ☐ White
   - ☐ Other:_____

6. Please indicate your religious affiliation:
   - o Catholicism
   - o Protestant
   - o Eastern Orthodox
   - o Hindu
   - o Islam
   - o Judaism
   - o None
   - o Other:_____

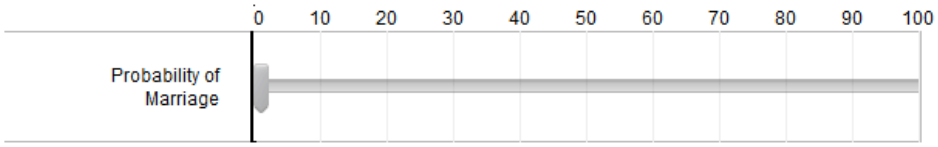
7. Not including your partner's income, what was your income last year, before taxes?
   - o $0-$9,999
   - o $10,000-$19,999
   - o $20,000-$29,999
   - o $30,000-$39,999
   - o $40,000-$49,999
   - o $50,000 or above

8. Are you currently:
    - In a casual dating relationship?
    - In a serious dating relationship?
    - Engaged to be married?
    - Married?

9. Have you and your partner ever lived together?
    - Yes.
    - No.

10. Are you and your partner currently living together?
    - Yes. We have lived together for (years, months):_____
    - No.

11. If unmarried, please rate the probability that you will marry your partner:



12. Is this a relationship where you have broken up and gotten back together at least once?
    - Yes. How many times have you broken up and gotten back together with this partner? (enter response in box) _____
    - No.

Selected items from the Marital Satisfaction Inventory, Revised

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Disaffection					
There is a great deal of love and affection expressed in our relationship.					
I believe our relationship is reasonably happy.					
Disharmony					
My partner and I need to improve the way we settle our differences.					
When we argue, my partner and I often seem to go over and over the same old things.					
My partner often fails to understand my point of view on things.					

Note. These items are samples from a copyrighted measure. Please read the copyright notice, given below.

Relationship Beliefs Inventory, Partner Cannot Change Scale

Using the scale provided, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current romantic relationship.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If you don't like the way the relationship is going, you can make it better.					
I do not expect my partner to be able to change.					
If my partner wants to change, I believe that s/he can do it.					
My partner can learn to become more responsive to his/her partner's needs.					
My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now.					

Disharmonious Cognitions Items

Using the scale provided, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current romantic relationship.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel criticized and misunderstood when we discuss our hot topics.					
I feel misunderstood by my partner.					
When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me.					
When we disagree, my spouse tries to understand my point of view.					

Relationship Disengagement Scale

Using the scale provided, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current romantic relationship.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
When I am around my partner I don't pay attention to him/her.					
When my partner is speaking, I pretend to agree or I avoid asking questions, in order to make things easier.					
When in my partner's presence, I keep to myself and speak less than I normally would with other people.					
When I am with my partner, I feel more tired than usual.					
When I think about my partner, I don't feel much of anything (i.e. apathetic or indifferent).					
I ignore my partner.					
I would prefer to spend less time with my partner.					
I feel frustrated in my relationship.					
I feel disappointed that my relationship with my partner is not how I once expected it would be.					
I think about breaking up with my partner.					
I have a lot of angry feelings toward my partner.					
I feel disappointed that my partner is not the person I once thought he/she was (or would be).					
I feel my relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in life.					
I feel a great deal of love and affection for my partner.					
When I have a personal problem my partner is the first person I turn to.					
I confide in my partner.					
I enjoy spending time alone with my partner.					

Episode-Specific Conflict Tactics Questionnaire

Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you used each of the following behaviors to deal with your last argument or disagreement with your romantic partner.

	Not at All	Once or Twice	Several Times	A Good Amount	Many Times
I tried to change the subject.					
I compromised with him/her.					
I calmly discussed the issue.					
I avoided him/her.					
I showed concern about his/her feelings and thoughts.					
I used threats.					
I avoided the issue.					
I explored solutions with him/her.					
I criticized an aspect of his/her personality.					
I sought a mutually beneficial solution.					
I shouted at him/her.					
I tried to postpone the issue as long as possible.					
I reasoned with him/her in a give and take manner.					
I tried to make him/her feel guilty.					
I changed the topic of discussion.					
I expressed my trust in him/her.					
I was sympathetic to his/her position.					
I blamed him/her for causing the conflict.					
I teased him/her.					
I was hostile.					
I ignored the issue.					
I showed that I lost my temper.					

I talked about abstract things instead of the conflict issue.					
I accepted my fair share of responsibility for the conflict.					
I criticized his/her behavior.					
I focused on the meaning of the words more than the conflict issue.					
I tried to understand him/her.					
I tried to intimidate him/her.					
I ignored his/her thoughts and feelings.					
I told him/her how to behave in the future.					
I denied that there was any problem or conflict.					
I was sarcastic in my use of humor.					
I kept my partner guessing what was really on my mind.					
I avoided the issue by focusing on how we were arguing instead of what we were arguing about.					
I blamed the conflict on an aspect of his/her personality.					
I explained why there was no problem at all.					

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule—Expanded Form

This scale consists of a number of words and phrases that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you have felt this way when disagreeing with your romantic partner. Use the scale provided to record your answers:

	Very Slightly or Not at All	A Little	Moderately	Quite a Bit	Extremely
cheerful					
disgusted					
attentive					
bashful					
sluggish					
daring					
surprised					
strong					
scornful					
relaxed					
irritable					
delighted					
inspired					
fearless					
disgusted with self					
sad					
calm					
afraid					
tired					
amazed					
shaky					
happy					

timid					
alone					
alert					
upset					
angry					
bold					
blue					
shy					
active					
guilty					
joyful					
nervous					
lonely					
excited					
hostile					
proud					
jittery					
lively					
ashamed					
at ease					
scared					
drowsy					
angry at self					
enthusiastic					
downhearted					
sheepish					
distressed					

blameworthy					
determined					
frightened					
astonished					
interested					
loathing					
confident					
energetic					
concentrating					
dissatisfied with self with self					

Unresolved Disagreement Items

Using the scale provided, indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your current romantic relationship.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
When we have difficulties in our relationship there seems to be little that my partner and I are able to do to bring about a reconciliation.					
After a disagreement or argument, we end up with very little resolved after all.					
We go for days without settling our differences.					
The same problems keep coming up again and again in our relationship.					
We rarely make much progress on our central issues.					
After a disagreement or an argument, I realize that the matter will have to be reargued in the near future.					
Our arguments are left hanging and unresolved.					
Our arguments seem to end in frustrating stalemates.					

Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory

You will receive personalized feedback based on your responses to the following items.

Conflict Engagement Subscale

Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
Launching personal attacks.					
Exploding and getting out of control.					
Getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant.					
Throwing insults and digs.					

Positive Problem Solving Subscale

Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
Focusing on the problem at hand.					
Sitting down and discussing differences constructively.					
Finding alternatives that are acceptable to each of us.					
Negotiating and compromising.					

Self-Protection Subscale

Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
Remaining silent for long periods of time.					

Reaching a limit, shutting down, and refusing to talk any further.					
Tuning the other person out.					
Withdrawing, acting distant and not interested.					

Acceptance Subscale

Using the scale provided, rate how frequently you use each of the following styles to deal with arguments or disagreements your romantic partner.

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All of the Time
Not being willing to stick up for myself.					
Being too compliant.					
Not defending my position.					
Giving in with little attempt to present my side of the issue.					

Positive-Negative Semantic Differential

Considering only the ***positive qualities*** of your relationship and ***ignoring the negative ones***, evaluate your relationship on the following qualities:
My relationship is…

	Not At All	A Tiny Bit	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Very	Extremely	Completely
Interesting								
Full								
Sturdy								
Enjoyable								
Good								
Friendly								
Hopeful								

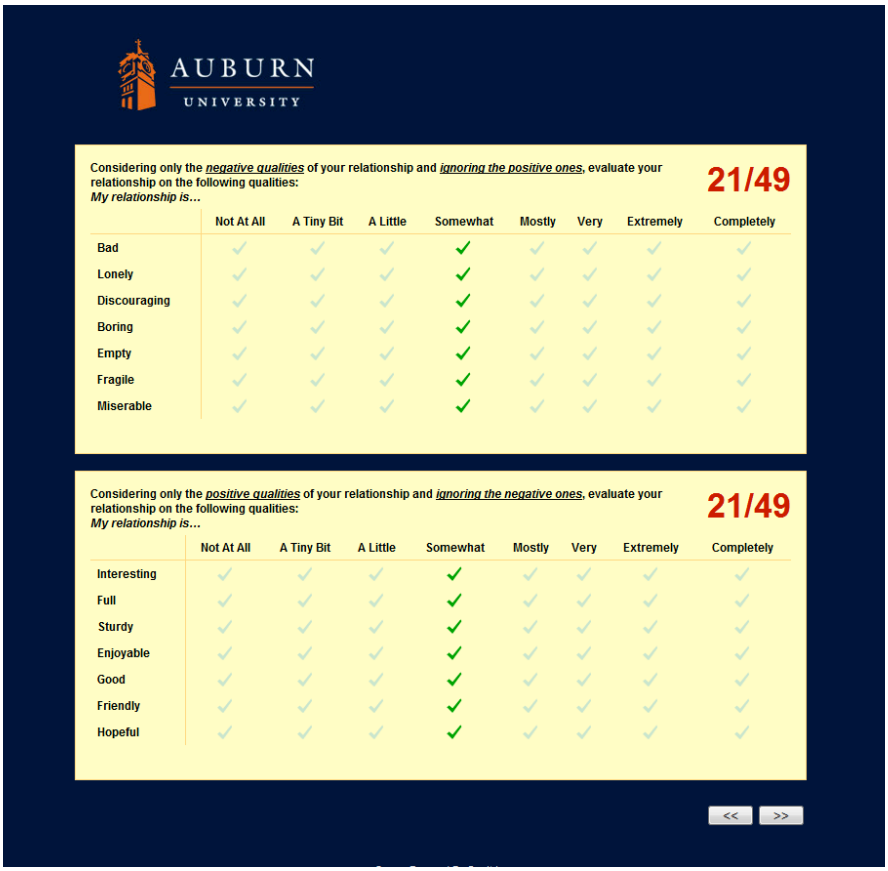
Considering only the ***negative qualities*** of your relationship and ***ignoring the positive ones***, evaluate your relationship on the following qualities:
My relationship is…

	Not At All	A Tiny Bit	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Very	Extremely	Completely
Bad								
Lonely								
Discouraging								
Boring								
Empty								
Fragile								
Miserable								

Appendix C

Personalized Feedback

Positive and Negative Relationship Qualities Sample Score Profile



Positive and Negative Relationship Qualities Feedback Text

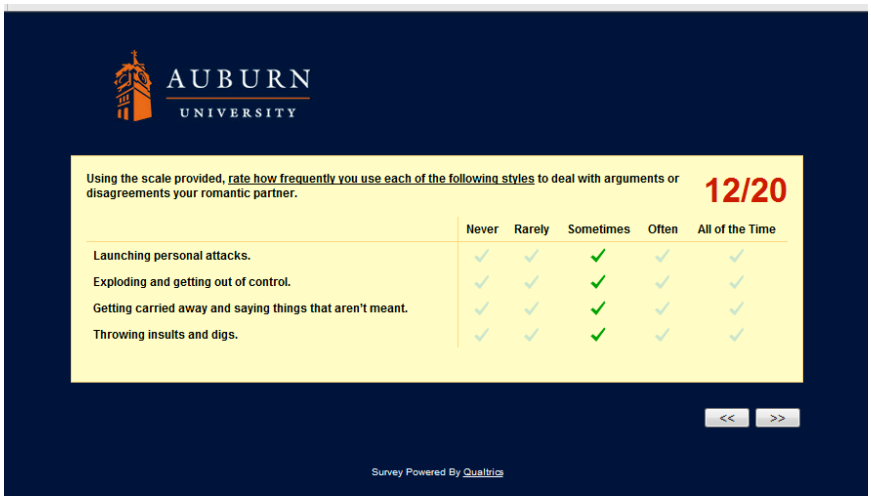
If your score on **Positive Qualities is 19 or greater** and your score on **Negative Qualities is 6 or less**, you can best be described as **happy** in your current romantic relationship. Although you experience the normal ups and downs of every relationship, you're satisfied overall with how things are going with your partner. You have warm, caring feelings for your partner and wouldn't wish to change many aspects of the relationship.

If your score on **Positive Qualities is 19 or greater** and your score on **Negative Qualities is 7 or greater**, you can best be described as **passionate** in your current romantic relationship. You may have a sense of happiness with your partner, but also recognize imperfections that exist in your relationship. You have both positive, affectionate feelings and stumbling blocks related to aspects of your relationship.

If your score on **Positive Qualities is 18 or less** and your score on **Negative Qualities is 6 or less**, you can best be described as **contented** in your current romantic relationship. You experience an even-keeled relationship with your partner. You don't have many negative or hostile feelings towards your partner and may have a sense of being settled into your relationship.

If your score on **Positive Qualities is 18 or less** and your score on **Negative Qualities is 7 or greater**, you can best be described as **frustrated** in your current romantic relationship. You may experience some happy times with your partner, but these may be outweighed by disappointment with the relationship. Despite your current relationship difficulties, you have so far maintained some commitment to your partner.

Conflict Engagement Sample Score Profile



Conflict Engagement Feedback Text

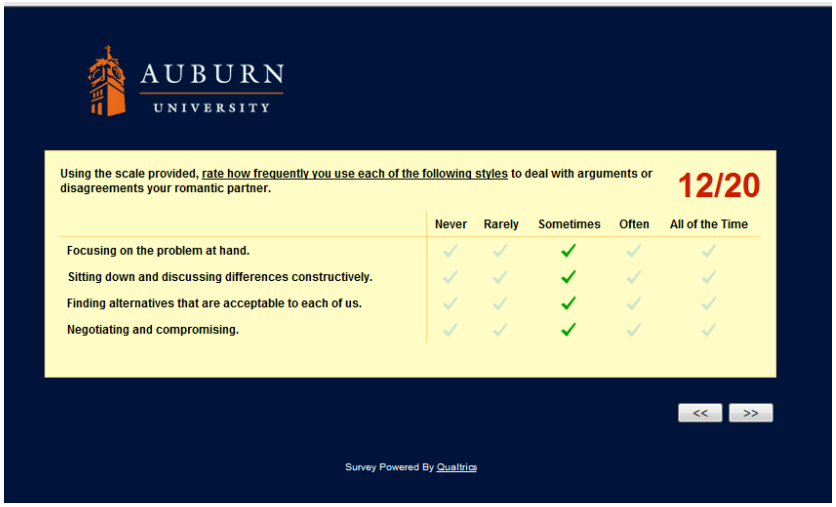
Conflict engagement describes behaviors in disagreements which communicate hostility towards one's partner and may indicate free expression of negative emotions. While direct conflict and approaching problems head-on may strengthen a relationship, high levels of conflict engagement may distract couples from addressing core aspects of disagreement.

If your score is **12 or less**, you are **less likely than the average person to use conflict engagement** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **between 13 and 17**, you are **as likely as the average person to use conflict engagement** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **18 or greater**, you are more **likely than the average person to use conflict engagement** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

Positive Problem Solving Sample Score Profile



Positive Problem Solving Normative Feedback

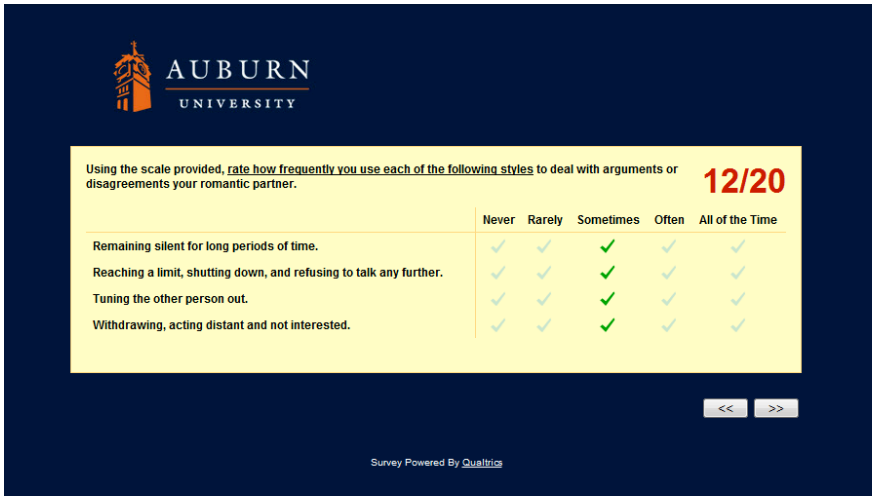
Positive problem solving characterizes a tendency to use compromise when discussing a disagreement with one's partner. Positive problem solving often involves utilizing the art of negotiation to satisfy the wants and needs of each person involved. The use of this strategy promotes the development of shared values and outcomes.

If your score is **4 or less**, you are **less likely than the average person to use positive problem solving** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **between 5 and 9**, you are **as likely as the average person to use positive problem solving** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **10 or greater**, you are **more likely as the average person to use positive problem solving** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

Self-Protection Sample Score Profile



Self-Protection Normative Feedback

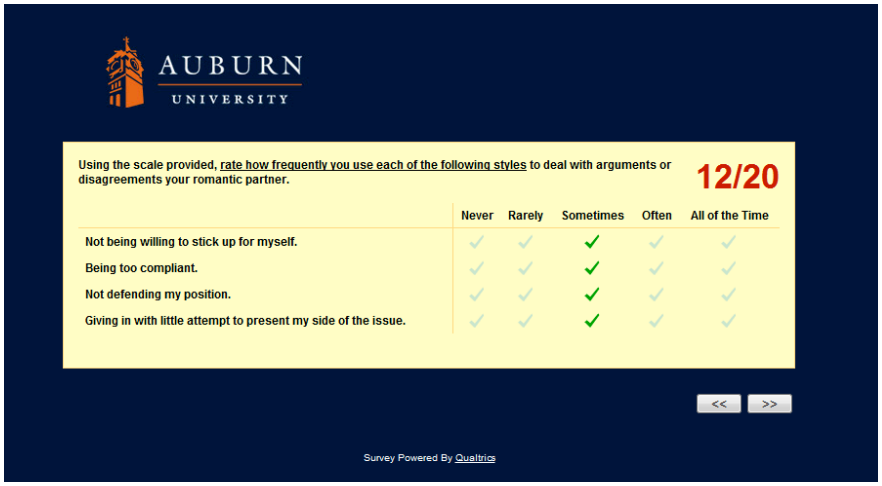
Self-protection includes behaviors that help the individual to remove him or herself from an uncomfortable disagreement with the partner. This strategy can involve tuning out one's partner in order to maintain equilibrium in the relationship. While the use of this strategy may prevent distress in the short-term, prolonged use of high levels of self-protection may be linked to lower relationship satisfaction.

If your score is **5 or less**, you are **less likely than the average person to use self-protection** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **between 6 and 11**, you are **as likely as the average person to use self-protection** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **12 or greater**, you are **more likely than the average person to use self-protection** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

Acceptance Sample Score Profile



Acceptance Normative Feedback

Acceptance describes a tendency to behave in ways that promote one's partners positions in disagreements. This strategy allows for resolution of the disagreement, often resulting in adopting the partner's desired resolution. Some amount of acceptance behaviors may demonstrate commitment to one's partner and a wish to please him or her. High levels of acceptance behaviors may suggest that you are reluctant to advocate for your relational wants.

If your score is **5 or less**, you are **less likely than the average person to use acceptance** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **between 6 and 10**, you are **as likely as the average person to use acceptance** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

If your score is **11 or greater**, you are **more likely than the average person to use acceptance** strategies during disagreements with your partner.

Debriefing Screen