

AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN
MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

By

LIN SHI

Bachelor of Art

Zhongshan University

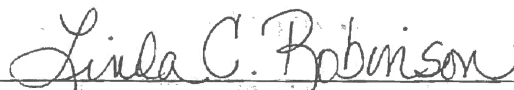
Guangzhou, China

1989

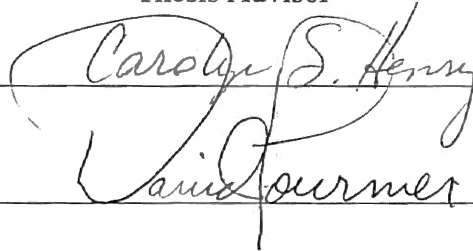
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in the partial fulfillment of
the requirement for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1994

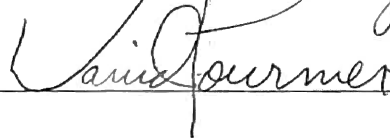
AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN
MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

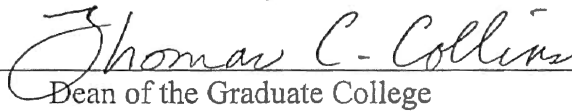
Thesis Approved:



Thesis Advisor







Dean of the Graduate College

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my major advisor, Dr. Linda Robinson for her intelligent supervision, constructive guidance, and warm encouragement. My sincere appreciation extends to my other committee members Dr. David Fournier and Dr. Carolyn Henry, whose guidance, assistance, encouragement are also invaluable.

I would also like to give my special appreciation to my husband, Haibo, for his unique suggestions to my research, his strong encouragement at times of difficulty, love and understanding throughout this whole process. Thanks also go to my parents for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Kay Murphy and the Department of Family Relations and Child development for sincere help and supporting during these 18 months of study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	2
HYPOTHESES	8
METHODOLOGY	9
RESULTS	11
DISCUSSION	12
REFERENCES	15
APPENDIXES	23
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	24
LITERATURE REVIEW	28
METHODOLOGY	47
SUPPLEMENTAL TABLE.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
I. Correlations Between Predictor Variables.....	20
II. Means and Standard Deviations.....	21
III. Hierarchical Regression of Conflict Resolution.....	22

Introduction

Marital communication is studied as a major predictor of marital satisfaction. As a significant component of marital communication, conflict resolution is also considered in relation to satisfaction in marriage. Researchers generally agree that effective patterns of communication and conflict resolution are positively related to marital satisfaction (White, 1989).

Scholarship regarding conflict resolution has increased in recent years. Researchers found that communication styles, personalities, and values relating to family roles are related to conflict resolution (Koren & Carlton, 1980; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991; Sanders, Smith & Alexander, 1990). Gender differences such as a wife-demanding /husband-withdrawal pattern (Krokoff, 1990) in conflict were also supported. However, understanding of gender differences in marital communication is far from complete (Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1990), and given the salience of conflict resolution to marital satisfaction, gender difference in communication is an area of particular interest to those concerned with fostering positive spousal relationships.

Based on these factors, the purpose of this study is to examine gender difference in marital conflict resolution. The central question of this research is: Do the factors associated with perceptions of conflict resolution differ according to gender?

Conceptual Framework

"Systems thinking is a way of looking at the world in which objects are interrelated with one another" (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Systems theory provides a framework for exploring family dynamics by placing the individual into the complicated network. The individual serves as a linking point in the system as well as the product of the system. Because systems theory takes factors in the system as well as individuals into account, it is an excellent theory for the study of marital conflict resolution.

The marital subsystem is composed of two unique individuals with their own preferences, interests, and desires which may result in the potential for conflicts. Spouses in the system are interdependent and mutually influenced, so that the behaviors of one individual affect those of the other. In conflict resolution the individual's behaviors are regulated by a reciprocal process in which A's perception of conflict resolution is the reaction to as well as an influence on B. Thus, the outcome of conflict resolution largely depends on the interactions between individuals who influence each other. A marital system which is willing to respond to changes initiated by the members and consider various alternatives in response to a particular situation may facilitate satisfactory conflict resolution. Otherwise, the spouses may be dissatisfied with their resolution of conflict.

Individuals in marriages may maintain different perceptions of conflict resolution which further influence the patterns of interaction in conflict resolution. Because the outcome of conflict resolution in the marital subsystem is related to the interactions of the individuals, it is important to study the factors which may influence the individual's perception of conflict and its resolution.

Also, conflict resolution is likely to be affected by other factors, such as personality, current and previous communication patterns, and power. Finally, factors associated with conflict resolution may differ according to gender, and the interactions of these factors with gender may contribute to conflict resolution.

Review of Literature

Given the inevitability of conflict between partners (Cahn, 1992; Sillars & Scott, 1983), research in marital conflict resolution usually focuses on its relationship to marital satisfaction. Relevant foci include areas of conflict within marriage and conflict resolution.

Areas of Conflict

Conflict is most likely to happen in intimate relationships (Cahn, 1992). When couples are not able to reconcile their differences in interests, preferences, and points of view, marital conflict is created. Yet, in working through issues in their marriage together, the marital relationship may be strengthened and enhanced (Gottman, 1991).

Money is the most commonly discussed issue among married couples (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). Usually couples fight about how to spend rather than how much to spend, and the fight does not disappear with an increase of income (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). When family income decreases and expenditures have to be cut, more conflicts appear between couples (Snyder & Norwak, 1984).

The sexual relationship also is reported as a major area of marital conflict. Couples may fight about any specific issues in the sexual relationship, but the most common argument is frequency of intercourse (Christensen, 1988). Although extramarital sex is less likely to be a frequent cause of marital conflict, couples are usually in serious conflict once the fact is known to the other (Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988).

Among couples who have children, the most serious disagreements are over the assignment of housework (Cowan et al., 1985). Childless couples tend to have better conflict resolution than couples with children (Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981). Husbands with working wives report more child care activity and more arguments with their wives (Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale, 1987). Other areas of conflicts are communication, jealousy, and in-law relations (Gottman, 1979).

Conflict Resolution

The stages of the family life cycle suggest a developmental process in conflict resolution (Galvin & Brommel, 1991). During the first two years of marriage, couples who have children behave more coercively than couples who remain childless. For couples who choose to have children in this period, four months after the baby is born, couples deal with conflicts less emotionally. During early childhood stages, parents

encounter more conflicts and offer fewer options. During the adolescent stage, marital conflicts increase with the increase of parent-adolescent conflict (Galvin & Brommel, 1991).

Zietlow and Sillars (1988) found that, in general, young couples use more direct and expressive behaviors in conflict than older couples. Middle-aged couples are similar to young couples when discussing salient topics and are similar to older couples when discussing less salient topics.

Rands et al. (1981) found three conflict resolution styles among couples: (1) attack, which includes hurting the other's feelings through getting mad, yelling and sarcasm; (2) avoidance, in which spouses avoid talking to each other about conflict and become distant; and (3) compromise, in which couples try to understand each other and come to a compromise through reasoning. Attacking and avoiding were negatively related to marital satisfaction, and compromising was positively related.

Rands et al. (1981) also found that escalation outcomes of conflict (e.g., couples feel angry and hurt afterwards) were negatively related to marital satisfaction. Intimacy, the outcome in which couples feel close and understand each other better, was positively related to marital satisfaction. Also, couples who do not use blame and anger in conflict reported the highest marital satisfaction (Rands et. al., 1981).

The degree of consensus of husbands and wives on conflict resolution has an impact on their marital satisfaction. The belief that conflict is resolvable relates to positive conflict behaviors and outcomes, such as persistence in conflict resolution, feelings of personal control over conflicts, and, therefore, high marital satisfaction. Also, couples who agree that conflicts should not be avoided reported high marital satisfaction (Crohan, 1992).

Distressed and nondistressed couples can be differentiated on the basis of communication patterns, especially conflict resolution patterns (White, 1989). Nondistressed couples process conflicts positively (Billings, 1979; Gottman, 1979;

Levenson & Gottman, 1985) and consistently (Jacobson, Follette, & McDonald, 1982). Distressed couples are more coercive and hostile than nondistressed couples, maintain inconsistent conflict resolution behaviors, and are less responsive verbally (Billings, 1979).

Consequently, satisfied couples are more likely to engage in positive reciprocity, and dissatisfied couples are more likely to engage in negative reciprocity (Gottman, 1979). The negotiation process of couples with high adjustment is represented by coaxing, confirming, exchanging feelings or emotions, and task-oriented strategies. Among low-adjusted couples, when one spouse attacked the other directly (confrontation) or indirectly (complaint), the other most often responded defensively (Ting-Toomey, 1983). Also, nondistressed couples are better at decoding and encoding in their nonverbal communication (Noller, 1984).

Factors Associated with Conflict Resolution

Communication. Verbal behaviors and conflict outcomes are closely related. Couples who resolve conflicts most efficiently are more responsive, more likely to offer possible solutions, and less likely to criticize their spouses (Koren & Carlton, 1980). Researchers also focused on self-disclosure, a perceived major component of marital communication (Hawkins, Weigberg, & Ray, 1980), and its contribution to conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Some researchers (e.g., Cosby, 1973) found that marital satisfaction was positively related to moderate levels of self-disclosure, but Jorgensen and Gaudy (1980) suggested that there is a positive and linear relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. However, disclosure of negative feelings between couples may be negatively related to marital satisfaction and conflict resolution (Galvin & Brommel, 1991; Balswick, 1988).

The more discrepancy in self-disclosure between couples, the less marital satisfaction and adjustment reported (Davidson, Balswick, & Halverson, 1983).

Balswick (1988) indicated that both husbands' and wives' self-disclosure of love, happiness, and sadness is positively related to marital adjustment. However, husbands' output of love is more important for wives' marital adjustment than is wives' output of love for husbands' adjustment. This is because wives are more concerned with receiving love disclosure (Balswick & Peck, 1971). Balswick (1988) also found that, for husbands, the perception of anger disclosure is negatively related to marital adjustment, while wives do perceive husbands' disclosure of anger as functional to marital adjustment. For women, disclosure of anger indicates that they want to share their feelings with their husbands. However, husbands believe that, if women are angry, they should keep the anger to themselves (Balswick, 1988).

Personality. Conflicts exist among both distressed and nondistressed couples. However, the degree of conflict largely depends on the partners' personalities (Goldberg, 1987). Personality evokes conflict in direct and indirect ways: one spouse could perform actions that upset the other, or one could evoke actions in the other person that in turn upset oneself (Buss, 1991).

Couples with characteristics such as competitiveness, easily provoked anger, high speed talking, impatience, and achievement striving showed higher frequencies of hostile/dominant behavior. These people are more sensitive to control and self-esteem issues, and the hostile-dominant behavior actually reflects a struggle for control (Sanders, Smith, & Alexander, 1990). Buss (1991) found that inadequacy of warmth, trust, emotional stability and perception in both males and females were related to the upset of their spouses. Dominance of husbands and wives was destructive to conflict resolution.

Krokoff (1991) found that, for both white-collar and blue-collar families, humor was related to husbands' and wives' conflict resolution when they were experiencing troubles at work. People with secure attachment (confident emotional attachment) were more likely to use integrating (integrate one's ideas with the partner's) and compromising (try to find a middle course) strategies than anxious/ambivalent (clinging, neediness, and

ambivalent feelings about relationships) and avoiding people (self reliance, emotional distance, insecurity). Anxious/ambivalent people were more likely than avoidant people to oblige their partners (Pistole, 1989).

Madden and Janoff-Bulman (1981) found wives who blamed their husbands more than they blamed themselves were significantly more distressed and poorer in conflict resolution than the wives who blamed themselves more than they blamed their husbands. Wives who attributed conflicts to their husbands' permanent characteristics were most distressed. However, the wives who felt that they had control over conflicts were more successful in conflict resolution and more satisfied with their marriages.

Equalitarian Roles. It is generally reported that men who hold nontraditional values about gender roles are more satisfied with their marriages (Balswick, 1988). Likewise, the more liberated the husbands regarding masculinity, and the more comfortable they are expressing affection, the less arguments with their wives (Harrell, 1990).

Husbands' distress is the highest when wives go to work against their husbands' wishes (Ross, Mirowsky & Huber, 1983). If husbands have to do more housework because wives go to work, there are more arguments between them (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Also, several studies show that, if wives push for a fair division of housework, more marital conflicts emerge (Benin & Agostinelli, 1988; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991).

Gender Differences. Thomson and Walker (1989) noted that women are more emotional during conflict and are more likely to exercise confrontation and emotional pressure. Distressed wives are more likely to engage in negative reciprocity than nondistressed wives (Floyd & Markman, 1983). Husbands are more logical and calm, use neutral messages and try to avoid or postpone conflict. Also, wives are more sensitive and responsive to husbands in conflict than husbands are with their wives (Floyd & Markman, 1983; Schaap, Buunk and Kerkstra, 1988).

Gender differences in conflict resolution are intensified in distressed marriages (Gottman & Levenson, 1988). Krokoff (1990) reported a wife-hostility/ husband-withdrawal pattern among dissatisfied couples and the level of wife's hostility is linked to husband's level of withdrawal. Christensen and Heavey (1990) found that both husbands and wives can be more demanding when discussing changes they want, but generally husbands tend to withdraw more and wives tend to demand more. However, when both husbands and wives are secure in attachment, they engage in demanding/withdrawal patterns significantly less frequently than other types of couples.

Hypotheses

The literature suggests that the following factors are associated with marital conflict resolution: communication, personality, and equalitarian roles. Studies also indicate that gender differences exist in marital conflict resolution. Conflict resolution may also vary according to occupation (Korkoff, 1991). Because education is one of the basic determinants of occupation, it can be posited that levels of education affect conflict resolution. Furthermore, conflict resolution in marriage varies in different developmental stages of the family life cycle (Zietlow & Sillars, 1988); different stages in marriage may necessitate different conflict resolution styles. Finally, the quality of conflict resolution changes with the presence of children (Rands et al., 1981) in order to deal with increased conflicts. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be considered:

Hypothesis 1: Communication, personality, and equalitarian roles will be positively related to conflict resolution.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship of communication, personality, and equalitarian roles to conflict resolution will vary according to gender.

Hypothesis 3: The demographic variables education, length of marriage, and presence of children will be significant predictors of conflict resolution.

Methodology

Sample

The study is part of a larger project and is using an existing database available from the authors of the Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness Inventory (ENRICH) (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1982). Couples in the database were seeking marital enrichment or marital counseling and volunteered to complete a Background Information Form and ENRICH separately. The sample (N = 4,157) included in this study was obtained from 600 locations in the United States.

Participants' age ranged from 17 to 88 (mean = 33.9, SD = 9.7) with 3,907 (94%) below the age of 50. Four thousand seventy-three (98%) of the participants had finished high school and 3,491 (84%) of the participants had at least some college education. One thousand six hundred and sixty-two (40%) of the participant held professional jobs; 707 (17%) were sales, technical and clerical workers; 499 (12%) were students; and 540 (13%) were homemakers. Three thousand five hundred and thirty-three (85%) of the participants were working either part-time or full-time jobs with 2411 (58%) working full-time only, 332 (8%) working both full-time and part-time, and 789 (19%) working only part-time. The average income of participants was \$15,000-29,999, with 1030 (25%) over \$30,000, 1122 (27%) between \$15,000-\$29,999, 378 (9%) between \$5,000-\$14,999, 411 (10%) under \$5,000, and 262 (6%) having no income. The average length of marriage was 9.5 (SD = 9) years with a range from less than one year to 50 years. All participants were currently married and 3471 (84%) of the participants were in their first marriage. One thousand eight hundred and forty-four (44%) of the participants were Catholic, 1071 (26%) of them were Fundamental Christian, 912 (22%) were Protestant, 12 (.3%) were Jewish, and 295 (7%) did not indicate their religious orientation. Three thousand eight hundred and sixty six (93%) of the participants were White.

Measurement

The ENRICH (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1982) inventory was used in this research. The inventory covers a range of topics in marital relationships: personality issues, realistic expectations, marital satisfaction, equalitarian roles, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual relationship, leisure activities, children and parenting, religious orientation, and family and friends. The personality issues, communication, conflict resolution and equalitarian roles subscales were used in this research. Communication examines spouses' attitudes and beliefs toward the importance of communication in marriage. Personality issues focus on the degree of partners' satisfaction with each other's behaviors. Equalitarian roles assesses spouses' attitudes and beliefs toward various family roles, and high scores reflect nontraditional gender roles values maintained by individuals. Conflict resolution examines the realistic attitudes toward marital conflict and the level of satisfaction toward marital conflict resolution (Olson et al., 1989) Items of these four subscales are listed in Appendix D. A Likert-style scale was used for each subscale: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = moderately disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree.

The inventory was reviewed and rated as relevant for engaged and married couples by practitioners (Fournier, Olson & Druckman, 1983). All twelve subscales are highly correlated with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (Fournier, Olson & Druckman, 1983). Original Cronbach's coefficient alpha for internal consistency were: personality .73, communication .68, conflict resolution .75, and equalitarian roles .71. (see Appendix D). Retest reliability estimates were: personality issues .81, communication .90, conflict resolution .90, and equalitarian roles .90.

Data Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine gender differences in conflict resolution. Pearson correlations between predictor variables were computed to ensure that the correlations did not exceed .75. Because the correlation between

communication and personality exceeded .75 ($r = .76$), these two variables were combined into a variable called communication/personality (Alpha = .90). The correlations were then recomputed (see Table 1). The current Cronbach's coefficient alpha for equalitarian roles and conflict resolution were .71 and .81 respectively.

In the first step, a dummy variable for gender was entered to examine the percentage of variance in conflict resolution accounted for by gender (1 = male, 0 = female). In the second step, the following background variables were entered: education, length of marriage, and presence of children. Presence of children was dummy coded (1 = children present, 0 = no children present). In step 3, communication/personality and equalitarian roles were entered. In the last step, dummy variables were entered to examine the following interactions: gender x communication/personality and gender x equalitarian roles. A tolerance test at the level of .10 was done to reduce the possibility of problems resulting from multicollinearity. Since neither of the interaction terms yielded significant beta coefficients in the preliminary analyses, the final model resulted from the first three steps. The results are listed in Table 3.

Results

The means and standard deviations of equalitarian roles, communication/personality, and conflict resolution are listed in Table 2. Gender, length of marriage, education, equalitarian roles and communication/personality were found to be significant predictors of conflict resolution in the hierarchical multiple regression equation. In the first step, a significant negative beta ($B = -.03340$, $p < 0.001$; 1 = male, 0 = female) was found for gender, indicating females reported higher conflict resolution scores than males. The R^2 for step 1 was .00003, indicating the contribution of gender to the variance in conflict resolution is minimal. In the second step, length of marriage yielded a significant negative beta coefficient ($B = -.03295$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that conflict resolution is negatively related to the length of marriage. The significant positive

beta ($B=.03241$, $p<0.001$) for education indicated conflict resolution increases with higher levels of education. Presence of children yielded an insignificant negative beta ($B=-.00854$, $p>.05$) suggesting no relationship between presence of children and conflict resolution. The change in R^2 for the second step raised the percentage of variance explained to .04. In the third step, both equalitarian roles ($B=.03226$, $p<0.001$) and communication/personality ($B=.81963$, $p<0.001$) showed significant positive relations with conflict resolution. This step increased the R^2 to .69; thus the equation explained 69% of the variance in conflict resolution. However, equalitarian roles and communication/personality accounted for 65% of the variance ($F = 1530.78$, $p < .001$, see Table 3), suggesting that equalitarian roles and communication/personality were the strongest predictors of conflict resolution.

Discussion

Results of this research indicated that equalitarian roles and communication/personality are strong predictors of conflict resolution in the model presented. Also, gender, length of marriage and education are significant predictors, yet they explained a relatively small proportion of the variance in conflict resolution.

The finding that females reported higher conflict resolution scores than males may be due to the socialization they received since they were young. Females are trained to be family oriented and to seek close relationships. Therefore, as these findings suggest, they turn out to be more familiar with family issues, have more realistic attitudes toward marital conflicts, and are more satisfied with their conflict resolution than males.

Communication/personality and equalitarian roles were positively related to individuals' perceptions of conflict resolution in the current sample. Communication may strengthen the mutual understanding between the couple through expressing feelings, explaining behaviors, etc. Personality may also have an impact on style and degree of self-disclosure exhibited by the partners. Therefore, individuals with higher

communication/personality scores may obtain better understanding of their spouses, be better understood by their spouses, be willing to accept the other's communication styles and behaviors, and adjust their responses in a way that contribute to conflict resolution. Consequently, they tend to have more realistic attitudes toward marital conflicts and greater satisfaction with conflict resolution. Similarly, individuals who value equalitarian roles may be more flexible and more likely to explore alternatives in conflict resolution, thereby increasing their level of satisfaction in conflict resolution.

The findings suggest that education is positively related to conflict resolution. This may be due to the fact that people with higher levels of education are more exposed to conflict resolution strategies.

The unsupported hypothesis concerning presence of children in relation to conflict resolution was based on previous research that presence of children has an impact on marital satisfaction and marital conflict. It was posited that conflict resolution may improve in response and adjustment to a new source of conflict, or decline because couples are overwhelmed by new conflicts. The insignificance of presence of children to conflict resolution may be due to previous findings that couples establish and stabilize their conflict resolution patterns during the first two years of marriage (Raush, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974). Thus, the presence of children may increase the potential for conflict but does not necessarily change the patterns of conflict resolution.

Length of marriage was found to be negatively related to conflict resolution. As the marriage progresses, couples experience decreasing marital satisfaction (McHale & Huston, 1985) and increasing marital conflict (Huston, McHale, & Crouter, 1986). Yet, marital satisfaction increases (Anderson, Russell, & Schumm, 1983) and couples begin to develop equality in their marriages after launching (Schaefer & Keith, 1981). These studies may explain the lower levels of conflict resolution associated with marital duration found in this research considering that 94% of the sample were 50 years of age or younger. The relationship of length of marriage with conflict resolution may differ

with an older sample whose children no longer live at home.

Of the variables considered in the model, communication/personality is the strongest predictor of marital conflict resolution, which indicates the importance of building effective communication and better personality in marriage. Based on this finding, couples should be encouraged and guided to be responsive, and to offer possible solutions instead of blaming the other so that a positive reciprocity in marital interaction can be maintained. It is also important for practitioners to help couples engage in positive self-disclosure which enhances mutual understanding and positive marital conflict resolution outcome.

Four skills were suggested to achieve equality in marriage: using level rather than vertical communication, giving and receiving criticism in an assertive manner, problem solving and encouragement (Tuites & Tuites, 1986). Level communication means that the person is open, honest, considerate, and values mutual respect. Vertical communication means that the person is dominant, superior, and controlling, exhibiting lack of mutual respect (Allred, 1974). The latter communication style violates equality in marriage, which may contribute to dissatisfaction in conflict resolution.

The positive association between education levels and conflict resolution suggests that the education in conflict resolution should start at early ages so that when people step into marriage they know how to handle conflict positively. The best outcome of education will result in an environment fostering effective conflict resolution and mutual respect, which can be enhanced by families, schools, communities, and the whole society.

REFERENCES

- Allred, G. H. (1974). How to strengthen your marriage and family. Provo: Brigham Young University Press.
- Anderson, S. A., Russell, C. S., & Schumm, W. R. (1983). Perceived marital quality and family life-cycle categories: A further analysis. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *45*, 127-139.
- Balswick, J. (1988). The inexpressive male. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Balswick, J., & Peck, C. (1971). The inexpressive male: A tragedy of American society. The Family Coordinator, *20*, 363-368.
- Benin, M. H., & Agostinell, J. (1988). Husbands' and wives' satisfaction with the division of labor. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *50*, 349-361.
- Billings, A. (1979). Conflict resolution in distressed and nondistressed married couples. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *47*, 368-376.
- Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1983). American couples. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Buss, D. M. (1991). Conflict in married couples: Personality predictors of anger and upset. Journal of Personality, *59*(4), 663-688.
- Cahn, D. D. (1992). Conflict in intimate relationships. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Christensen, A. (1988). Dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds). Perspectives on marital interaction (pp. 31-52). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990). Gender and social structure in the demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *59*(1), 73-81.
- Cosby, P. C. (1973). Self-disclosure: A literature review. Psychological Bulletin, *79*, 73-91.
- Cowan, C. P., Cowan, P. A., Keming, G., Garrett, E., Coysh, W. S., Curtis-Boles, H., & Boles, A. J. III. (1985). Transitions to parenthood: His, hers, and theirs. Journal of Family Issues, *6*, 451-481.

- Crohan, S. E. (1992). Marital happiness and spousal consensus of beliefs about marital conflict: A longitudinal investigation. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9, 89-102.
- Crouter, A. C., Perry-Jenkins, M., Huston, T., L., & McHale, S. M. (1987). Process underlying father involvement in dual-earner and single-earner families. Developmental Psychology, 23, 431-440.
- Davidson, B., Balswick, J., & Halverson, C. (1983). Affective self-disclosure and marital adjustment: A test of equity theory. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45, 93-102.
- Floyd, F. J., & Markman, H. J. (1983). Observational biases in spouse interaction: Toward a cognitive behavioral model of marriage. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51, 450-457.
- Fournier, D. G., Olson, D. H., & Druckman, J. M. (1983). Assessing marital and premarital relationships: The PREPARE-ENRICH Inventories. In E. Filsinger (Ed.), Marriage and Family Assessment: A Sourcebook for Family Therapy. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Galvin, G. M. & Brommel, B. J. (1991). Family communication: Cohesion and change (3rd ed.). New York: HarperCollins.
- Goldberg, M. (1987). Patterns of disagreement in marriage. Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, 21, 42-52.
- Gottman, J. M. (1991). Predicting the longitudinal course of marriages. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(1), 3-7.
- Gottman, J. M. (1979). Marital interaction. New York: Academic Press.
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. S. (1988). The social psychophysiology of marriage. In Noller P. & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (Eds). Perspectives in marriage interaction. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Harrell, W. A. (1990). Husband's masculinity, wife's power, and marital conflict. Social Behavior and Personality, 18(2), 207-216.
- Hawkins, J. L., Weisberg, C., & Ray, R. E. (1980). Spouse differences in communication style, perception, and behavior. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 585-593.

- Huston, T. L., McHale, S. M., & Crouter, A. C. (1986). When the honeymoon's over: Changes in the marriage relationship over the first year. In R. Gilmore & S. Duck (Eds.), The emerging field of personal relationships (pp. 109-132). Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Jacobson, N. S., Follette, W. C., & McDonald, D. W. (1982). Reactivity to positive and negative behavior in distressed and nondistressed married couples. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *50*, 706-714.
- Jorgensen, S. R., & Gaudy, J. C. (1980). Self-disclosure and satisfaction in marriage: The relationship examined. Family Relations, *29*, 281-287.
- Koren, P., & Carlton, K. (1980). Marital conflict: Relations among behaviors, outcomes, and distress. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, *48*, 460-468.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1990). A time-series analysis of withdrawal, hostility, and displeasure in satisfied and dissatisfied marriages. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *52*, 95-105.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1991). Job distress is no laughing matter in marriage, or is it? Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, *8*, 5-25.
- Levenson, R. W., & Gottman, J. M. (1985). Psychological and affective predictors of change in relationship satisfaction. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, *49*, 85-94.
- Madden, M. E., & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1981). Blame, control, and marital satisfaction: Wives' attributions for conflict in marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *43*, 663-674.
- McHale, S. M., & Huston, T. L. (1985). The effect of transition to parenthood on the marriage relationship: A longitudinal study. Journal of Family Issues, *6*, 409-434.
- Menaghan, E. G., & Parcel, T. L. (1991). Parental employment and family life: Research in the 1980s. In A. Booth (Ed.). Contemporary families: Looking forward, looking back. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations.
- Noller, P., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1990). Marital communication in the eighties. Journal of Marriage and the Family, *52*, 832-843.
- Noller, P., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1984). Nonverbal communication and marital interaction. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Olson, D. H., Fournier, D. G., & Druckman, J. M. (1982). Counselor's manual for PREPARE-ENRICH (rev. ed.). Minneapolis: PREPARE-ENRICH, Inc.

- Olson, D. H., McCubbin, H. I., Barnes, H. L., Larsen, A. S., Musen, M., J., & Wilson, M. A. (1989). Families: What makes them work. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pistole, M. C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 6, 505-510.
- Rands, M., Levinger, G., & Mellinger, G. D. (1981). Patterns of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Journal of Family Issues, 2, 297-321.
- Raush, H. L., Barry, N. A., Hertel, R. K., & Swain, M. A. (1974). Communication conflict and marriage. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass..
- Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Huber, J. (1983). Dividing work, sharing work, and in-between: Marriage patterns and depression. American Sociological Review, 48, 809-823.
- Sanders, J. D., Smith, T. W., and Alexander, J. F. (1990). Type A behavior and marital interaction: Hostile-dominant responses during conflict. Journal of Behavior Medicine, 14, 567-580.
- Schaefer, R. B. & Keith, P. M. (1981). Equity in marital roles across the family life cycle. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 43, 359-367.
- Schaap, C., Bunnk, B., & Kerkstra, A. (1988). Marital conflict resolution. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds). Perspectives on marital interaction. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Sillars, A. L., & Scott, M. D. (1983). Interpersonal perception between intimates: An integrative review. Human Communication Research, 10, 53-176.
- Snyder, K. A., & Nowak, T. C. (1984). Job loss and demoralization. International Journal of Mental Health, 13, 92-106.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1983). An analysis of verbal communication patterns in high and low marital adjustment groups. Human Communication Research, 9(4), 306-319.
- Thompson, L., & Walker, A. J. (1989). Gender in families: Women and men in marriage, work, and parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 845-871.
- Tuites, A. H., & Tuites, D. E. (1986). Equality in male/female relationships. Individual Psychology, 42(2), 191-200.

- Whitchurch, G. G., & Constantine, L. L. (1993). Systems theory. In P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, R. LaRossa, W. R. Schumm, & S. K. Stinmetz (Eds.). Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. New York: Plenum Press.
- White, B. (1989). Gender difference in marital communication patterns. Family Process, 28, 89-106.
- Zietlow, P. H., & Sillars, A. L. (1988). Life stage differences in communication during marital conflicts. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5, 223-245.

Table 1 Correlations Among Predictor Variables

	CR	CP	ER	PC	ED	LM
CR	1.0000 p = .					
CP	.8290 p = .000	1.0000 p = .				
ER	.0938 p = .000	.0665 p = .000	1.0000 p = .			
PC	-.0928 p = .000	-.0796 p = .000	-.1312 p = .000	1.0000 p = .		
ED	.1373 p = .	.1292 p = .000	.0870 p = .000	-.0036 p = .000	1.0000 p = .	
LM	-.1141 p = .000	-.0827 p = .000	-.1795 p = .000	.4703 p = .000	.0539 p = .000	1.0000 p = .000

CR = Conflict Resolution; CP = Communication/Personality; ER = Equalitarian Roles;

PC = Presence of Children; ED = Education; LM = Length of Marriage

$n = 4,157, p \leq .001$

Table 2 Scales Means and Standard Deviations

Scales	Mean	SD	Theoretical Range	Actual Range
Equalitarian Roles	35.34	5.86	10-50	18-50
Communication/ personality	66.13	14.15	20-100	27-100
Conflict Resolution	32.73	6.90	10-50	10-50

$n = 4157$

Table 3 Hierarchical Multiple Regression of Conflict Resolution

Predictor Variable	<u>b</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>T</u>	Sig <u>T</u>	ΔR^2	<u>R</u> ²
Step 1						
Gender ^a	-.46201	-.03340	-3.82000	.00010	.00003	.00003
Step 2						
Length of Marriage	-.02533	-.03295	-3.35300	.00080		
Education	.21766	.03241	3.65300	.00030		
Presence of children ^b	-.13557	-.00854	-.87400	.38200	.04307	.04310
Step 3						
Equalitarian Roles Communication /Personality	.03808 .40040	.03226 .81963	3.63700 92.57400	.00030 .00000	.64806	.69117

$F=1530.78$, $p < .001$

b = Unstandardized Beta; B = Standardized Beta; R² = R Square; ΔR^2 = R Square Change

b and B are reported for final step.

ΔR^2 and R² are reported for each step.

a 1 = male, 0 = female

b 1 = children present, 0 = no children present

Appendix A
Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework

"Systems thinking is a way of looking at the world in which objects are interrelated with one another" (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). Systems theory plays an important role in analyzing family issues which are likely to be affected by many factors. First, researchers are urged to study the issues systematically. In the systems point of view, possible correlations are included in the researcher's observation, and the significance of the relations will be determined. Second, unlike the linear causation-result pattern, systems theory places the individual into the complicated network. In this perspective, the individual is a linking point in the system as well as the product of the system. For example, when studying marital communication, the communication pattern contributes to marital satisfaction. However, the communication pattern is also the product of the interaction of many factors in the family system and the supersystem. Because systems theory pays attention to both contexts and individuals, it is an excellent theory for the study of marital conflict resolution.

Systems are "set(s) of elements standing in interaction among themselves and with the environments" (Von Bertalanffy, 1975, p. 159). Subsystems are small interdependent parts of a larger system. A family system can be composed of individual subsystems, the marital subsystem, the parent-child subsystem, and sibling subsystems. Components in a system are interdependent and mutually influenced. The behaviors of one component affect every other component in the system (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993).

In the system perspective, the relationship between components of the system differs from the components as individuals. The couple in communication forms a relationship through exchanging messages, and thus, forms a system. Using a systems approach, conflict resolution should be studied in the context of the couple relationship.

The marital subsystem is composed of two unique individuals with their own preferences, interests, and desires which result in the potential for conflicts. Spouses in

the system are interdependent and mutually influenced, so that the behaviors of one individual affect the other's. In conflict resolution, individuals' behaviors are regulated by a reciprocal process in which A's perception of conflict resolution largely depends on the interactions between individuals who influence each other. A marital system which is willing to respond to changes initiated by the member(s) and consider various alternatives in response to a particular situation may facilitate satisfactory conflict resolution. Otherwise, the spouses may be dissatisfied with their resolution of conflict.

Individuals in marriages may maintain different perceptions of conflict resolution which further influence the patterns of interaction in conflict resolution. Because the outcome of conflict resolution in the marital subsystem is related to the interactions of the individuals, it is important to study the factors which may influence individuals' perception of conflict and its resolution.

Also, conflict resolution is affected by other factors, such as personality, current and previous communication patterns, and power. Finally, factors associated with conflict resolution may differ according to gender, and the interaction of these factors with gender may contribute to conflict resolution.

REFERENCES

- Von Bertalanffy, L. (1975). Perspectives on general system theory: Scientific philosophical studies. New York: George Braziller.
- Whitchurch, G. G. & Constantine, L. L. (1993). Systems theory. In Boss, P. G., Doherty, W. J., LaRossa, R., Schumm, W. R., & Stinmetz, S. K. (Eds.). Sourcebook of family theories and methods: A contextual approach. New York: Plenum Press.

References

- Alford, J. (2000). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2001). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2002). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2003). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2004). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2005). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2006). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2007). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2008). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2009). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2010). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2011). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2012). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2013). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2014). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2015). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2016). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2017). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2018). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2019). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Alford, J. (2020). *Business Ethics: A Practical Approach*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Appendix B

Review of Literature

Review of Literature

Given the inevitability of conflict between partners (Cahn, 1992; Sillars & Scott, 1983), research in marital conflict resolution usually focuses on its relationship to marital satisfaction. Relevant foci include areas of conflict within marriage and conflict resolution strategies.

Marital Conflict

Conflict is most likely to happen in intimate relationships (Cahn, 1992). Couples engage in interactions with their own interests, preferences, and points of view. When they are not able to reconcile their differences, marital conflict is created. Major areas of marital conflicts are financial management, raising children, sexual relationship, communication difficulties, personality, division of housework, relations with relatives and friends, and substance abuse (Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981; Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988).

Conflict as Process

Conflict occurs when there is a disagreement and incompatibility (Cahn, 1992), whether or not it is overt. Conflict in intimate relationships may be viewed as a process (Cahn, 1992; Galvin & Brommel, 1991). According to Galvin et al (1991), the process includes six stages: (1) In the prior condition stage, at least one member of the system perceives that the boundaries, rules, or beliefs are threatened. Conflict is absent at this stage, but it will emerge with pressure. (2) In the frustration awareness stage, at least one member of the system perceives that something inside or outside the system is threatening or attacking them. Conflict may end at this point if one of the members shows power and expects compliance. However, it does not mean that the cause of the dissatisfaction has been removed. (3) During the active conflict stage, nonverbal and verbal messages are exchanged. Some systems have heated fights whereas others may be quite calm, depending on the system's rules and styles of argument. The longer the conflict continues, the more frustration is created. (4) In the solution or nonsolution stage,

the system may develop a solution. This solution can be satisfying and constructive to the well-being of the system or dissatisfying and destructive. The system may fail to reach a solution because they do not have resources to solve the disagreement. If a system exercises too many nonsolutions, the communication within the system will be damaged. (5) The follow-up stage includes later reactions to the conflict. Feelings such as anger or fear may stay until they lead to the next conflict. (6) The resolved stage refers to the period when the conflict moves out of the system and no longer affects its balance. For instance, the argument of who should take the child to the elementary school disappears when the child grows up.

Conflict Patterns Across the Life Cycle

Conflict patterns also change over the stages of family life (Galvin & Brommel, 1991). During the first two years of marriage, couples who have children behave more coercively than couples who remain childless. For couples who choose to have children in this period, four months after the baby is born, couples deal with conflicts less emotionally. During early childhood stages, parents encounter more conflicts and offer fewer options. During the adolescent stage, marital conflicts increase with the increase of parent-adolescent conflict. Zietlow and Sillars (1988) found that young couples use more direct and expressive behaviors in conflict. Older, retired couples exercise less direct and expressive behaviors compared to young couples. Middle-aged couples are similar to young couples when discussing salient topics and are similar to older couples when discussing less salient topics.

Areas of Marital Conflict

Behaviors in marital conflict differ among different types of couples and across different life stages. However, there are some common potential areas in daily life that are likely to cause marital conflict. Gottman (1979) reported five general topics: communication (spend time together, sharing feelings), sex (manner, style and frequency of sex life), jealousy (the partner pays attention to other people), in-law relations (ways to

treat the other's parents), and chores (housework, raising children, financial management).

Gottman's analysis is from a system-interactions perspective (Cahn, 1992). From the cognitive-exchange perspective, the sources of conflict are (1) perceived imbalance in resources of social exchange, including such factors as discrepancies in age, intelligence, and physical attraction; (2) love/sex/affection, which refers to different male-female perspectives in love, sex, and affection (e.g., men associate love with sexual gratification, while women associate love with emotional intimacy); (3) perceived inequality in which men and women who perceive themselves in equal relationships are happier than those who in unequal ones; (4) perceived unequal distribution of power (e.g., husband dominant); and (5) relationship dissatisfaction, in which one perceives that the relationship is generally dissatisfying (Chan, 1992).

Research has shown how some of these potential problematic areas cause marital conflicts. Money is the most commonly discussed issue among married couples (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983) and money management is very likely to cause marital conflicts. Before getting married, each person make his/her own financial decision; but after getting married they have to make joint decisions which may not result in individual satisfaction (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). Usually couples fight about how to spend rather than how much money to spend. Conflicts occur when couples have different views on how to spend, and it does not disappear with the increase of income (Bulmstein & Schwartz, 1983). When family income decrease and expenditures have to be cut, more conflicts appear between couples (Snyder & Norwak, 1984).

The sexual relationship is reported as a major area of marital conflict. Couples may fight about any specific issues in the sexual relationship, but the most common argument is frequency of intercourse (Christensen, 1988). Although extramarital sex is less likely to be a frequent cause of marital conflict, couples are usually in serious conflict once the fact is known to the other (Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988).

Research generally agrees that a couple's marital satisfaction declines with the

birth of their first child. During the transition to parenthood, role traditionalization is intensified with the wife quitting her job. Cowan and her colleagues (1988) reported that conflict increases with the birth of the first child, and the most serious disagreements are over assignment of housework. Childless couples had better conflict resolution than couples with children (Rands, Livingier, & Melinger, 1981). Husbands with working wives report more child care activity and more arguments with their wives (Crouter, Perry-Jenkins, Huston, & McHale, 1987).

Marital conflict is not necessarily destructive to the marriage. Gottman (1991) found that some patterns of conflict are beneficial to the marriage although they are initially painful. On the contrary, wives who only offer agreement and compliance to conflict experience deterioration in their marriage over time. Conflict can be constructive if the process promotes understanding between couples. It can be destructive if it threatens the relationship. The next question is, how does conflict resolution affect marital satisfaction?

Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction

Styles of Resolution and Marital Satisfaction

Fitzpatrick's (1988) typology of marriage describes different conflict behaviors among different types of couples. Traditional couples value traditional sex roles and time together, and they emphasize stability of marriage. They are likely to confront conflict and view confrontation as a means of maintaining stability. Independent couples are similar to traditional couples except they are more independent, more open and direct in communication about conflict, and more resentful of the one who withdraws. Separate couples, on the contrary, emphasize and maintain their autonomy through avoiding conflicts.

The study of Sillars, Pike, Jones, and Redmon (1983) using Fitzpatrick's marriage typology is more comprehensive since it explored categories within each

marriage type. Generally, satisfied couples were more positive and less negative in expressing their feelings; however, Communication patterns were different among more or less satisfied separates. More satisfied separates maintained emotional neutrality and minimized discussion of conflict while dissatisfied separates did the opposite. Both more and less satisfied independents expressed negative feelings frequently, but more satisfied independents exercised more self-disclosure. Finally, more satisfied traditionals expressed their emotions more positively and less negatively than dissatisfied couples.

Rands et al. (1981) conducted a study to find out how couples' experience of conflicts and conflict resolution relate to their marital satisfaction. Their sample included 244 young couples in the San Francisco area who participated in a fertility decision-making study. One hundred and sixty-three couples were childless and the rest had two children. Couples were asked questions concerning fertility and their agreements were measured. They found three conflict resolution styles among these couples: (1) attack, which includes hurting the other's feelings through getting mad, yelling and sarcasm; (2) avoidance, in which spouses avoid talking to each other about conflict and become distant; and (3) compromise, in which couples try to understand each other and come to a compromise through reasoning. Attacking and avoiding were negatively related to marital satisfaction, and compromising was positively related. Rands et al.(1981) also found that escalation outcomes of conflict (e.g., couples feel angry and hurt afterwards) was negatively related to marital satisfaction. Intimacy, the outcome that couples feel close and understand each other better, was positively related to marital satisfaction.

Based on these five factors, Rands et al. (1981) further generated four conflict resolution types. Type I couples were described as nonintimate-aggressive. These couples did not have a satisfying outcome after conflict, and they did not feel intimate. Their marital satisfaction was reported as the lowest. Type I accounted for 30% of the sample. Type II couples were nonintimate-nonaggressive. This group lacked vitality, and they felt little intimacy after conflicts. Their marital satisfaction was higher than that of Type I,

and they accounted for 20% of the sample. Type III couples were intimate-aggressive. Open disagreement was less likely to prevent them from seeking intimacy in their relationship, but their marital satisfaction depended on whether conflict ended in intimacy or not. Type III accounted for 20% of the sample. Type IV couples were intimate-nonaggressive. Their conflict resolution tended to increase marital satisfaction, and they did not use blame or anger in conflict. They were reported to have the highest marital satisfaction. This group of people accounted for 30% of the sample.

Chafetz (1980) studied conflict resolution through analyzing power, and tried to find the relationship between "political process" and marital satisfaction. By "political process" the author meant decision-making concerning family resources, such as money, energy and time. The strategies couples used were authority, control, influence, and manipulation. The cost of exercising authority was the lowest while manipulating was the highest. The author pointed out that, with the independence of women in the recent 50 years, husbands had to use high cost strategies, which in turn, gave wives more power in decisions of marital dissolution.

Consensus on Conflict Resolution

Consensus of husbands and wives on conflict resolution has an impact on their marital satisfaction. Low marital satisfaction is related to a discrepancy between couples on whether disagreements can be settled (Crohan, 1992; Doherty, 1981a; Doherty, 1981b). The belief that conflict is resolvable relates to positive conflict behaviors such as persistence in conflict resolution, feelings of personal control over conflicts, and, therefore, high marital satisfaction. Discrepancy between couples that conflicts should be avoided relates to low marital satisfaction for women. However, the relationship between amount of discrepancy and marital satisfaction is not very significant (Crohan, 1992).

Crohan (1992) further studied whether the discrepancy of content of disagreement between couples related to their marital satisfaction. Crohan asked three questions of the sample: Is disagreement in marriage resolvable? Should conflict be

avoided? Is disagreement in marriage healthy? Crohan divided his sample into four groups: both husbands and wives agreed; both husbands and wives disagreed; wives agreed and husbands disagreed; and husbands agreed and wives disagreed. Results showed that, for the first question, both husbands and wives in group 1 reported higher marital satisfaction than the other three groups. For the second question, both husbands and wives in group 2 (i.e. both thought conflicts should not be avoided) reported much higher marital satisfaction than other groups. For the third question, wives in group 1 reported significantly high marital satisfaction. Crohan's study showed that the discrepancy between partners' perceptions of conflict is significantly related to marital satisfaction.

Conflict resolution and marital satisfaction are mutually influenced. Not only is marital satisfaction affected by conflict resolution (Fitzpatrick, 1988; Rands et al., 1981), but marital satisfaction also has an impact on conflict resolution (Gottman, 1979; Ting-Toomey, 1983).

Conflict Resolution Among Distressed and Nondistressed Couples

Communication patterns during conflict have been widely studied. Studies generally focused on communicating styles of distressed and nondistressed couples. Satisfied couples offer more positive and less negative responses than dissatisfied couples (Gottman, 1979; Levenson & Gottman, 1985). Satisfied couples are more likely to engage in positive reciprocity, and dissatisfied couples are more likely to engage in negative reciprocity (Gottman, 1979). Also, nondistressed couples are better at decoding and encoding in their nonverbal communication (Noller, 1984).

Using sequential analysis, Margolin and Wampold (1981) studied reciprocity and reactions in distressed and nondistressed couples. Results showed that nondistressed couples emit significantly more positive verbal and nonverbal responses than distressed couples. Likewise, Cousins and Vincent (1983) studied couples' emotional interaction during their transitions to parenthood. The sample included couples of moderate, high

and very high marital adjustment. The data was collected one month after the birth of the first child. They found that, consistent with previous research, satisfied couples used more supportive behaviors while dissatisfied couples show more punitive behaviors. Well-adjusted couples showed caring and approval more frequently than poorly adjusted couples when they were discussing an upsetting incident unrelated to their marriage (Cousins & Vincent, 1983).

Ting-Toomey (1983) studied negotiation processes in high, moderate, and low adjustment marriages and obtained similar findings. The results indicated that verbal negotiation patterns are significantly different from one group to another. The negotiation process of couples with high adjustment is represented by coaxing, confirming, exchanging feelings or emotions, and task-oriented strategies. Among low-adjusted couples, when one spouse attacked the other directly (confront) or indirectly (complain), the other most often responded defensively. Among moderate-adjusted couples, the negotiation process was represented by agreeing, confirming, and coaxing behaviors.

These studies underscore the importance of successful conflict resolution in marriage. The next question is: What factors are associated with conflict resolution?

Factors Associated with Conflict Resolution

Communication

Verbal behaviors and conflict outcomes are closely related. Koren and Carlton (1980) studied four verbal behaviors in conflict: inquiry (e.g., seeking opinions, feelings from the other), responsiveness (giving feedback that the other's influence attempt is being heard), criticism (attempting to influence the other through blame), and solution proposal (attempting to influence the other through suggesting solutions or modifying proposed solutions). They found that, among these four verbal behaviors, criticism, solution proposal, and responsiveness are predictors of conflict outcome. The combination of the three verbal behaviors accounted for 41% of the variance in conflict

outcome with criticism accounting for the most (criticism 24%, solution proposal 12%, and responsiveness 5%). In other words, couples who have better conflict resolution are more responsive, more likely to offer possible solutions, and less likely to criticize their spouses.

Researchers also focused on self-disclosure and its contribution to conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Self-disclosure is a process by which a marriage partner expresses feelings, perceptions, fears, and doubts of the inner self to the other partner, allowing relatively private and personal information to surface in the relationship that is normally not revealed in the course of day-to-day interaction (Jorgensen & Gaudy, 1980). Self-disclosure is generally perceived as a major component of marital communication (Hawkins, Weigberg, & Ray, 1980). However, the results obtained are quite inconsistent. Some researchers (e.g., Cosby, 1973) found that marital satisfaction related positively to medium self-disclosure. That is to say, marital satisfaction was likely to be negatively affected when self-disclosure was either higher or lower than the medium level. However, the research done by Jorgensen and Gaudy (1980) suggested that there is a positive and linear relationship between self-disclosure and marital satisfaction. The more self-disclosure between couples, the more satisfaction they perceive in their marriage. Some research, though, suggests that disclosure of negative feelings between couples is negatively related to marital satisfaction and conflict resolution (Galvin & Brommel, 1991; Balswick, 1988).

The research done by Davidson and his colleagues (1983) focused on the style of disclosure and its effect on marital satisfaction. They indicated that the more discrepancy in self-disclosure between couples, the less marital satisfaction and adjustment reported. Balswick (1988) reported that both husbands' and wives' self-disclosure of love, happiness, and sadness is positively related to marital adjustment. However, husbands' output of love is more important for wives' marital adjustment than is wives' output of love for husbands' adjustment. This is because wives are more concerned with receiving

love disclosure (Balswick & Peck, 1971). Balswick (1988) also found that, for husbands, the perception of anger disclosure is negatively related to marital adjustment, while wives do perceive husbands' disclosure of anger as functional to marital adjustment. For women, disclosure of anger indicates that they want to share their feelings with their husbands. However, husbands believe that, if women are angry, they should keep the anger to themselves.

Personality

Conflicts exist among distressed and nondistressed couples. However, the degree of conflict largely depends on the couples' personalities (Goldberg, 1987). Personality evokes conflict in direct and indirect ways. One could perform actions that upset the other, or one could evoke actions in the other person that in turn upset oneself (Buss, 1991).

Sanders, Smith, and Alexander (1990) studied how Type A and Type B behaviors contribute to conflicts. Type A behavior consists of such characteristics as competitiveness, easily provoked anger, high speed talking, impatience, and achievement striving. Type B behavior shows the opposite characteristics. Among husband A/wife A, A/B, B/A, and B/B couples, no difference was found in low-conflict discussions. However, during high-conflict discussion, A/A couple showed a higher frequency of hostile/dominant behavior. Also Type A men in A/A marriages displayed higher hostile/dominant levels than Type A men in A/B marriages. Type A women exhibited similar patterns. The authors posited that Type A people are more sensitive to control and self-esteem issues. The hostile-dominant behavior actually reflects a struggle for control.

Buss (1991) studied five personality dimensions: "Surgency (dominance, extroversion vs. submissiveness, introversion), Agreeable (warm, trusting vs. cold, suspicious), Conscientiousness (reliable, well-organized vs. undependable, disorganized), Emotional stability (secure, even-tempered vs. temperamental), and Intellect or openness (perceptive, curious vs. imperceptive, incurious)" (Buss, 1991, p. 665). Buss found that

low agreeableness, emotional stability, and intellect in both males and females were related to the upset of their spouses. High surgency of husbands and wives were destructive to conflict resolution.

Krokoff (1991) studied how humor related to husbands' and wives' conflict resolution when they were experiencing troubles at work. Krokoff carefully selected a sample of 52 couples which was well balanced in occupation (blue-collar and white-collar), marital satisfaction, and demographic characteristics. When white-collar husbands were under job distress, they were less likely to follow their wives' positive affect and less likely to respond positively to their wives' humor. Yet when they were under more distress, they were more likely to respond to their wives negative affect with humor. When white-collar wives were under job distress, they were less likely to respond to their husbands' negative affect with humor. For blue-collar couples, when husbands were under job distress, both husbands and wives were more likely to respond with humor to negative affect. When wives were under job distress, husbands were more likely to respond with humor to wives' negative affect. However, for blue-collar couples, when husbands were under more distress, both husbands and wives were likely to avoid conflicts in their marriages.

Pistole (1989) studied attachment style and its relationship with conflict resolution. Three attachment styles are: secure (confident emotional attachment), anxious/ambivalent (clinging, neediness, and ambivalent feelings about relationships), and avoidant (self-reliance, emotional distance, insecurity). The author found that people with secure attachment were more likely to use integrating (integrate one's ideas with the partner's) and compromising (try to find a middle course) strategies than anxious/ambivalent and avoiding people. Anxious/ambivalent people were more likely than avoidant people to oblige their partners.

Madden and Janoff-Bulman (1981) studied wives' attributions regarding marital conflicts. They found that wives' blaming husbands (blaming husbands for conflicts) and

controlling (the confidence that one can control marital conflicts) were related to marital satisfaction and conflict resolution. Wives who blamed their husbands more than they blamed themselves were significantly more distressed and poorer in conflict resolution than the wives who blamed themselves more than they blamed their husbands. Wives who attributed conflicts to husbands' permanent characteristics were most distressed. However, the wives who felt that they had control over conflicts were more successful in conflict resolution and more satisfied with their marriages.

Conflict resolution strategies can be broadly classified as pro-social or anti-social strategies (Roloff, 1976). During conflict, one can choose avoidance, which is usually considered as an anti-social behavior. However, the research done by Fitzpatrick, Fallis and Vance (1982) showed that avoidance cannot be categorized as pro-social or anti-social in its function. Whether its function is pro-social or anti-social can only be judged through its effects on sequential interactions.

Equalitarian Roles

As more and more women are joining the labor force and working full-time, it is increasingly important for them to be equal with men in jobs, housework and decision making. Among couples who disagree on whether wives should work, "there are more wives who want to work than husbands who want to let them" (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983, p. 118). Working wives make power balanced in families and gain more respect from their husbands. However, wives' employment is not related to husbands' doing more housework (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Husbands' distress is the highest when wives go to work against their husbands' wishes (Ross, Mirowsky & Huber, 1983). If husbands have to do more housework because wives go to work, there are more arguments between them (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Also, several studies show that, if wives push for a fair division of housework, more marital conflicts emerge (Benin & Agostinelli, 1988; Menaghan & Parcel, 1991).

It is generally reported that men who hold nontraditional values about men and

women are more satisfied with their marriages (Balswick, 1988). Likewise, the more liberated the husbands regarding masculinity, the less arguments with their wives (Harrell, 1990). Men who are less traditional in their masculinity are more comfortable in expressing affection, which results in less argument with their wives (Harrell, 1990).

Power struggles are the most common form of marital disagreement (Goldberg, 1987). The major enemy of equal relationship in marriage is the desire for power (Tuites & Tuites, 1986). Tuites and Tuites (1986) suggested that equality does not equate with sameness; equality means mutual respect, shared responsibilities, and interdependence. They suggested four skills to achieve equality in marriage: using level rather than vertical communication, giving and receiving criticism in an assertive manner, problem solving, and encouragement. Level and vertical communication were first described by Allred (1974). Level communication means that the person is open, honest, and considerate, and values mutual respect. Vertical communication means that the person is dominant, superior, and controlling, and exhibits lack of mutual respect. The later communication style violates equality in marriage and is related to negative outcome in conflicts.

Gender Differences

In their review of previous research, Thomson and Walker (1989) discussed differences in conflict resolution. Although the difference in how males and females handle conflict are quite small, different patterns still exist. Women are more emotional during conflict and more likely to exercise confrontation and emotional pressure. Distressed wives are more likely to engage in negative reciprocity than nondistressed wives (Floyd & Markman, 1983). Husbands are more logical and calm, use neutral messages and try to avoid or postpone conflict. Also, wives are more sensitive and responsive to husbands in conflict than husbands are with their wives. Schaap, Buunk and Kerkstra (1988) also mentioned the same pattern in conflict resolution.

Gender differences in conflict resolution are intensified in distressed marriages (Gottman & Levenson, 1988). Krokoff (1990) reported a wife-hostility/husband-

withdrawal pattern among dissatisfied couples. The level of wives' hostility is linked to husbands' level of withdrawal. Christensen and Heavey (1990) found that both husbands and wives can be more demanding when discussing changes they want; but husbands tend to withdraw more and wives tend to be demand more.

The gender issue in the relationship between attachment and demanding/withdrawal was also studied. Senchak and Leonard (1992) pointed out that when both husbands and wives are secure, they engage in demanding/withdrawal patterns significantly less frequently than other types of couples.

Gottman (1991) indicated that the demanding/withdrawing is a reciprocal process leading to divorce or separation:

The first stage begins with marital conflict in which the husband becomes very physiologically aroused and stonewalls with his wife. Then, finally, emotionally withdraws from the conflict. Over time he becomes overwhelmed by his wife's emotions and avoidant of any conflict with her.

The husband's stonewalling is very aversive for the wife and leads to her physiological arousal. She responds by trying to reengage her husband.

The second stage is marked by the withdrawal of the wife. She expresses criticism and disgust. Their lives become increasingly more parallel and he is fearful. In short, the husband's withdrawal from hot marital interaction is an early precursor of the wife's' withdrawal. When both withdrawal and defensive, the marriage is on its way toward separation and divorce. (p.5)

REFERENCES

- Allred, G. H. (1974). How to strengthen your marriage and family. Provo: Brigham Young University Press.
- Balswick, J. (1988). The inexpressive male. Lexington: Lexington Books.
- Balswick, J., & Peck, C. (1971). The inexpressive male: A tragedy of American society. The Family Coordinator, 20, 363-368.
- Benin, M. H., & Agostinell, J. (1988). Husbands' and wives' satisfaction with the division of labor. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 50, 349-361.
- Blumstein, P., & Schwartz, P. (1983). American couples. New York: William Morrow and Company.
- Buss, D. M. (1991). Conflict in married couples: Personality predictors of anger and upset. Journal of Personality, 59(4), 663-688.
- Cahn, D. D. (1992). Conflict in intimate relationships. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Chafetz, J. S. (1980). Conflict resolution in marriage: Toward a theory of spousal strategies and marital dissolution rates. Journal of Family Issues, 1(3), 397-421.
- Christensen, A. (1988). Dysfunctional interaction patterns in couples. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds). Perspectives on marital interaction (pp. 31-52). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990). Gender and social structure in the demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59(1), 73-81.
- Cosby, P.C. (1973). Self-disclosure: A literature review Psychological Bulletin, 79, 73-91.
- Cousin, P. C., & Vincent, J. P. (1983). Supportive and aversive behavior following spousal complaints. Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy, 45, 679-681.
- Cowan, C. P., Cowan, P. A., Keming, G., Garrett, E., Coysh, W. S., Curtis-Boles, H., & Boles, A. J. III. (1985). Transitions to parenthood: His, hers, and theirs. Journal of Family Issues, 6, 451-481.

- Crohan, S. E. (1992). Marital happiness and spousal consensus of beliefs about marital conflict: A longitudinal investigation. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9, 89-102.
- Crouter, A. C., Perry-Jenkins, M., Huston, T. L., and McHale, S. M. (1987). Process underlying father involvement in dual-earner and single-earner families. Developmental Psychology, 23, 431-440.
- Davidson, B., Balswick, J., & Halverson, C. (1983). Affective self-disclosure and marital adjustment: A test of equity theory. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 45, 93-102.
- Doherty, W. J. (1981a). Cognitive process in intimate conflict: I Extending attribution theory. American Journal of Family Therapy, 9, 3-13.
- Doherty, W. J. (1981b). Cognitive process in intimate conflict: II Efficacy and learned helplessness. American Journal of Family Therapy, 9, 35-44.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1988). Between husbands and wives. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Fitzpatrick, M. A., Fallis, S., & Vance, L. (1982). Multifunctional coding of conflict resolution strategies in marital dyads. Family Relations, 31, 61-70.
- Floyd, F. J. & Markman, H. J. (1983). Observational biases in spouse interaction: Toward a cognitive behavioral model of marriage. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51, 450-457.
- Galvin, G. M., & Brommel, B. J. (1991). Family communication: Cohesion and change (3rd ed.). New York: Harper Collins.
- Goldberg, M. (1987). Patterns of disagreement in marriage. Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality, 21, 42-52.
- Gottman, J. M. (1979). Marital interaction. New York: Academic Press.
- Gottman J. M. (1991). Predicting the longitudinal course of marriages. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 17(1), 3-7.
- Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. S. (1988). The social psychophysiology of marriage. In P. Noller & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (Eds). Perspectives in marriage interaction. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- Harrell, W. A. (1990). Husband's masculinity, wife's power, and marital conflict. Social Behavior and Personality, 18(2), 207-216.

- Hawkins, J. L., Weisberg, C., & Ray, R. E. (1980). Spouse differences in communication style, perception, and behavior. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 42, 585-593.
- Jorgensen, S. R. & Gaudy, J. C. (1980). Self-disclosure and satisfaction in marriage: The relationship examined. Family Relations, 29, 281-287.
- Koren, P., & Carlton, K. (1980). Marital conflict: Relations among behaviors, outcomes, and distress. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 48, 460-468.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1990). A time-series analysis of withdrawal, hostility, and displeasure in satisfied and dissatisfied marriages. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52, 95-105.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1991). Job distress is no laughing matter in marriage, or is it? Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 8, 5-25.
- Levenson, R. W., & Gottman, J. M. (1985). Psychological and affective predictors of change in relationship satisfaction. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 49, 85-94.
- Madden, M. E., & Janoff-Bulman, R. (1981). Blame, control, and marital satisfaction: Wives' attributions for conflict in marriage. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 43, 663-674.
- Margolin, G., & Wampold, B. (1981). Sequential analysis of conflict and accord in distressed and nondistressed marital patterns. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 49(4), 554-567.
- Menaghan, E. G., & Parcel, T. L. (1991). Parental employment and family life: Research in the 1980s. In Alan Booth (Ed.). Contemporary families: Looking forward, looking back. Minneapolis, MN: National Council on Family Relations.
- Noller, P. (1984). Nonverbal communication and marital interaction. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Pistole, M. C. (1989). Attachment in adult romantic relationships: Style of conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. Journal of Social Personal Relationship, 6, 505-510.
- Rands, M., Levinger, G., & Mellinger, G. D. (1981). Patterns of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Journal of Family Issues, 2, 297-321.
- Roloff, M. E. (1976). Conflict resolution strategies, relationships and relational changes. In G. R. Miller (Ed.). Explorations in interpersonal communication. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

- Ross, C. E., Mirkowsky, J., & Huber, J. (1983). Dividing work, sharing work, and in-between: Marriage patterns and depression. American Sociological Review, 48, 809-823.
- Sanders, J. D., Smith, T. W., & Alexander, J. F. (1990). Type A behavior and marital interaction: Hostile-dominant responses during conflict. Journal of Behavior Medicine, 14, 567-580.
- Schaap, C., Buunk, B., & Kerkstra, A. (1988). Marital conflict resolution. In P. Noller & M. A. Fitzpatrick (Eds.), Perspectives on marital interaction. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Senchak, M., & Leonard, K. E. (1992). Attachment styles and marital adjustment among newlywed couples. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 9, 51-64.
- Sillars, A. L., Pike, G. R., Jones, T. S., & Redmon, K. (1983). Communication and conflict in marriage. Communication Year Book, 7, 414-431.
- Sillars, A. L., & Scott, M. D. (1983). Interpersonal perception between intimates: An integrative review. Human Communication Research, 10, 53-176.
- Snyder, K. A., & Nowak, T. C. (1984). Job loss and demoralization. International Journal of Mental Health, 13, 92-106.
- Ting-Toomey, S. (1983). An analysis of verbal communication patterns in high and low marital adjustment groups. Human Communication Research, 9(4), 306-319.
- Thompson, L., & Walker, A. J. (1988). Gender in families: Women and men marriage, work, and parenthood. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51, 845-871.
- Tuites, A. H., & Tuites, D. E. (1986). Equality in male/female relationships. Individual Psychology, 42(2), 191-200.
- Zietlow, P. H., & Sillars, A. L. (1988). Life stage differences in communication during marital conflicts. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5, 223-245.

Appendix C
Methodology

Methodology

Hypotheses

The literature suggests that the following factors are associated with marital conflict resolution: communication, personality, and equalitarian roles. Studies also indicate that gender differences exist in marital conflict resolution. Also, conflict resolution may vary according to occupation (Korkoff, 1991). Because education is one of the basic determinants of occupation, it can be posited that levels of education affect conflict resolution. Furthermore, conflict resolution in marriage varies in different development stages (Zietlow & Sillars, 1988), which can be reasoned as different stages in marriage necessitate different conflict resolution styles, and couples need time to find out appropriate conflict resolution skills and adjust to these skills. Finally, we also know that quality of conflict resolution changes with the presence of children (Rands et al., 1981) in order to deal with increased conflicts. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be considered:

Hypothesis 1: Communication, personality, and equalitarian roles will be positively related to conflict resolution.

Hypothesis 2: The relationship of communication, personality, and equalitarian roles to conflict resolution will vary according to gender.

Hypothesis 3: The demographic variables education, length of marriage, and presence of children will be significant predictors of conflict resolution.

Sample

The research is a secondary analysis of survey data. The sample included in this study was obtained from 600 locations in the United States. Most of the couples were seeking marital enrichment through programs sponsored by churches and community agencies, and others were seeking marital counseling. The sample included 4157 individuals.

Participants' age ranged from 17 to 88 (mean = 33.9, SD = 9.7) with 3,907 (94%)

below the age of 50. Four thousand seventy-three (98%) of the participants had finished high school and 3,491 (84%) of the participants had at least some college education. One thousand six hundred and sixty-two (40%) of the participants held professional jobs; 707 (17%) were sales, technical and clerical workers; 499 (12%) were students; and 540 (13%) were homemakers. Three thousand five hundred and thirty-three (85%) of the participants were working either part-time or full-time with 2411 (58%) working full-time only, 332 (8%) working both full-time and part-time, and 789 (19%) working only part-time. The average income of participants was \$15,000 to \$29,999, with 1030 (25%) over \$30,000, 1122 (27%) between \$15,000-\$29,999, 378 (9%) between \$5,000-\$14,999, 411 (10%) under \$5,000, and 262 (6%) having no income. The average length of marriage was 9.5 (SD = 9) years with a range from less than one year to 50 years. All participants were currently married and 3471 (84%) of the participants were in their first marriages. One thousand eight hundred and forty-four (44%) of the participants were Catholic, 1071 (26%) of them were Fundamental Christian, 912 (22%) were Protestant, 12 (.3%) were Jewish, and 295 (7%) did not indicate religious denomination. Three thousand eight hundred and sixty-six (93%) of the participants were White.

Measurement

The Enriching and Nurturing Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness inventory (ENRICH) (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1982) was used in this research. The inventory covers a range of topics in marital relationships: personality issues, realistic expectations, marital satisfaction, equalitarian roles, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual relationship, leisure activities, children and parenting, religious orientation, and family and friends. Personality issues, communication, conflict resolution and equalitarian roles will be used in this research. Personality issues focuses on the degree of partners' satisfaction with each other's behaviors, and high scores reflect nontraditional gender role values maintained by individuals. Communication concerns with the degree of sharing feelings and ideas in

marriage. Equalitarian roles assesses spouses' attitudes and beliefs toward various family roles, and high scores reflect nontraditional gender role values maintained by individuals. Conflict resolution examines the realistic attitudes toward marital conflict and the level of satisfaction toward marital conflict resolution. Items are listed in Appendix C. A Likert-style scale was used: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = moderately agree, 3 = undecided, 4 = moderately disagree, and 5 = strongly disagree.

Content Validity. The items in ENRICH were developed to assess possible problems in marriage. Representative articles on conflict were reviewed, among which personality issues were mentioned 26 times, equalitarian roles 9 times, communication 9 times, and conflict resolution 7 times. Face validity was also obtained. The inventory was reviewed and rated relevant for engaged and married couples by practitioners (Fournier, Olson & Druckman, 1983).

Construct Validity. The relationship between ENRICH and over 100 previous scales were assessed. There was a significant relationship between all scales and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale. The ENRICH was also assessed through the existing measure on conflict, communication, empathy, etc. The result of factor analysis showed that, among 12 scales, 11 revealed unique factors (Fournier, Olson & Druckman, 1983).

Reliability. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for internal consistency were: personality .73, communication .79, conflict resolution .75, and equalitarian roles .71. (see Appendix D). Retest reliability estimates were: personality issues .81, communication .90, conflict resolution .90, and equalitarian roles .90. (Fournier, Olson, & Druckman, 1983).

Procedure

This study is part of a larger project and is using an existing database available from the authors of the ENRICH Inventory. Couples in the database were seeking marital enrichment or marital counseling and volunteered to complete a Background Information

Form and ENRICH separately. They were asked not to put their names on either Background Information Form or ENRICH so that confidentiality would be maintained. Answer forms were sent in for computer processing and became part of the larger database.

Research Design and Data Analysis

The research was a secondary analysis of survey data. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to examine gender differences in conflict resolution. Pearson correlation between variables were computed to ensure that the correlation between variables did not exceed .75. Because the correlation between communication and personality exceeded .75 ($r = .76$), these two variables were combined into a variable called communication/personality.

In the first step, gender was entered to examine the percentage of variance in conflict resolution accounted for by gender (1 = male, 0 = female). In the second step, the following background variables were entered: education, length of marriage, and presence of children. In step 3, communication, personality, and equalitarian roles was entered. In the last step, dummy variables were entered to examine the following interactions: gender x communication/personality issues and gender x equalitarian roles). A tolerance test at the level of .10 was done to further protect from multicollinearity. Since neither of the interactions were significant, the final model resulted from the first three steps.

Internal Validity. Internal validity is "the extent to which we can infer casual connections from a relationship between two variables" (Judd, Smith, & Kidder, 1991, p.32). There are six threats to internal validity: selection, maturation, history, instrumentation, morality, and selection by maturation (Judd, Smith, & kider, 1991). Maturation and mortality was not a threat because the time to finish the inventory was relatively short. ENRICH was the only instrument used in this research, therefore, instrumentation was not a threat to the internal validity. Selection by maturation can also

be excluded from threats because the subjects were not assigned to different treatments. However, selection could be a threat to the internal validity because it was not a randomized sample. Also, the sampling was a continuous one, and the sample may have been affected by certain political, economical or cultural influences. Therefore, history could also be a threat to the internal validity.

External Validity. The sample was obtained from 600 locations in the United States. Various age groups were included in the sample. The possible threat to the external validity is that most of the participants were urban, white, middle class, and from the Mid-west area of the United States.

Error. Some participants who sought marriage therapy might overstate their distress.

Generalizability. The demographic characteristics of the sample (urban, White, middle-aged, middle-class Americans) may limit the generalizability of the research. Also, the generalizability might be affected by the fact that majority of the participants were from the Mid-west area of the United States. However, at least it can be applied to the broad Mid-west area and provide suggestions to other areas.

REFERENCES

- Fournier, D. G., Olson, D. H., & Drunkman, J. M. (1983). Assessing marital and premarital relationships: The PREPARE-ENRICH Inventories. In Filsinger, E. (Eds.), Marriage and family assessment: A sourcebook for family therapy. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Judd, C. M., Smith, E. R., & Kidder, L. H. (1991). Research methods in social relations. Philadelphia: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Krokoff, L. J. (1991). Job distress is no laughing matter in marriage, or is it? Journal of Social and Personal relationships, 8, 5-25.
- Olson, D. H., Fournier, D. G., & Druckman, J. M. (1982). Counselor's manual for PREPARE-ENRICH (rev. ed.). Minneapolis: PREPARE-ENRICH, Inc.
- Olson, D. H., McCubbin, H. I., Barnes, H. L., Larsen, A. S., Musen, M, J., & Wilson, M. A. (1989). Families: What makes them work. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rands, M., Levinger, G., & Mellinger, G. D. (1981). Patterns of conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Journal of Family Issues, 2, 297-321.
- Zietlow, P. H., & Sillars, A. L. (1988). Life stage differences in communication during marital conflicts. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 5, 223-245.

APPENDIX D
Supplemental Table

Appendix D: Supplemental Table of Subscales and Reliability

Subscale		Original Alpha (Olson et al, 1983) (n=1344)	Current Alpha (n=4157)
Personality Issues	<p>There are times when I am bothered by my partner's jealousy. Sometimes I am concerned about my partner's temper. At times, I am concerned that my partner appears to be unhappy and withdrawn. My partner should smoke, drink or use drugs less often. At times, my partner is not dependable or does not always follow through on things. When we are with others, I am sometimes upset with my partner's behavior. Sometimes my partner is too stubborn. My partner is often critical or has a negative outlook. Sometimes I have difficulty dealing with my partner's moodiness. At times, I think my partner is too domineering.</p>	.73	.90
Communication	<p>It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my partner. When we are having a problem, my partner often gives me the silent treatment. My partner sometimes makes comments which put me down. I am sometimes afraid to ask my partner for what I want. I wish my partner was more willing to share his/her feelings with me. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me. Sometimes my partner does not understand how I feel. I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk with each other. I do not always share negative feelings I have about my partner because I am afraid he/she will get angry. My partner is always a good listener.</p>	.68	

Subscale		Original Alpha (Olson, et al , 1983) (N=1344)	Current Alpha (N=4157)
Equalitarian Roles	<p>I believe that the woman's place is basically in the home.</p> <p>If both of us are working, the husband should do the same amount of household chores as the wife.</p> <p>In our family, the wife should not work outside the home unless it is an absolute financial necessity.</p> <p>In our marriage, the husband should be as willing to adjust as the wife.</p> <p>Even if the wife works outside the home, she should still be responsible for running the household.</p> <p>The wife should trust and accept the husband's judgments on important issues.</p> <p>For us, the husband's occupation is always regarded as more important than the wife's.</p> <p>If there are (were) young children, the wife should not work outside the home.</p> <p>Both of us should jointly agree on all important decisions.</p> <p>In our marriage, the wife will be encouraged to work outside the home.</p>	.71	.71
Conflict Resolution	<p>In order to end an argument, I usually give up too quickly.</p> <p>My partner and I have different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements.</p> <p>When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me.</p> <p>When we are having a problem, I can always tell my partner what is bothering me.</p> <p>Sometimes, we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.</p> <p>I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.</p> <p>I sometimes feel our differences never seem to get resolved.</p> <p>To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say anything.</p> <p>At times, my partner does not take our disagreements seriously.</p> <p>When we argue, I usually end up feeling the problem was all my fault.</p>	.75	.81

VITA

Lin Shi

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Science

Thesis: AN EXPLORATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN
MARITAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Major Field Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Beijing, China, on March 19, 1966, the daughter of Songshan Shi and Shufang Wang.

Education: Graduated from Jinshan Senior Middle School, Shantou City, China, in June 1985; received Bachelor of Art degree in Foreign Language and Literature from Zhongshan University, Guangzhou, China in June 1989. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Family Science at Oklahoma State University in July 1994.

Experience: Employed as a Assistant Teacher in Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Zhongshan University, Guangzhou, China. Employed as a graduate research assistant in Department of Family Relations and Child Development, Oklahoma State University, 1993 to present.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date:05-05-94

IRB#:HE-94-039

Proposal Title:CONTRIBUTIONS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION OF MALES AND
FEMALES IN MARRIAGE

Principal Investigator(s):Linda C. Robinson, Lin Shi

Reviewed and Processed as:Exempt

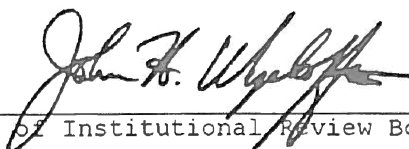
Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT NEXT
MEETING.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR
RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL. ANY
MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for
Deferral or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:


Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: May 5, 1994