REJECTION SENSITIVITY, TRAIT AGGRESSION, AND CONFLICT BEHAVIORS IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

by

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(Under the Direction of Jennifer A. Samp)

ABSTRACT

Personality characteristics can incline a person to imbue aspects of a situation with personal psychological meaning. Because of this, personality traits also influence behavior. Rejection sensitivity, a dispositional quality defined by the tendency to anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to perceived rejection, is proposed to be a personal quality that guides conflict behavior. By employing a diary study of 100 participants in romantic relationships, the associations between rejection sensitivity and trait aggression, conflict behaviors, and perception of conflict severity were examined. Hierarchical multivariate linear modeling revealed that rejection sensitivity and trait aggression were independently related to dominating conflict behavior, and that aggression was related to perceptions of conflict severity. This implies that rejection sensitive individuals' behavior during conflict is independent of how serious, or trivial, they consider the conflict to be. The findings demonstrate that certain personality characteristics impact conflict behavior more than the perception of conflict severity.

INDEX WORDS: Rejection sensitivity, Trait aggression, Conflict Behavior, Conflict Style, Conflict Perceptions, Romantic Relationships

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B. A., Pepperdine University, 2005

M. A., The University of Georgia, 2007

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2007

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August 2007

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Michael Casey, whose unyielding support and encouragement persisted despite his personal trials. His confidence in me was a continued source of inspiration throughout the completion of this work, as was the perseverance he demonstrated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is difficult to overstate my gratitude for my advisor, Jennifer Samp, for her help throughout the entire thesis process. Her guidance extended from the conception of this project to its conclusion and beyond.

I would like to thank Tina Harris and Jennifer Monahan for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this thesis.

I am indebted to my colleagues for their assistance in data collection. I would like to thank David Cisneros, Todd Goen, Christopher Groscurth, Shawna Harris, Eric Jenkins, Dr. Kristine Schaller, and Austin Scott for their help with the data collection for this work.

I am grateful for Matthew Bruce, whose unconditional support sustained me during my time at the University of Georgia.

Lastly, and most importantly, I wish to thank my parents, Mary Lou Barrientos and Delfina Bedarte, whose unending love and support is the only reason I have made it this far. Together they instilled in me the value of education, the desire to achieve, and the courage to follow my dreams.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In general, people have an exceptionally strong need to feel accepted and valued by others, and an even stronger aversion to being rejected (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). As essential sources of emotional, psychological, and physical well-being, intimate relationships provide the potential for basic needs of belonging and acceptance to be fulfilled (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Burman & Margolin, 1992; Wood, Rhodes, & Whelan, 1989). As intimacy between partners increases, so does their interdependence, which coalesces to produce the viable conditions for conflict to occur with regularity in romantic relationships. As an inevitable consequence of the growth and change that take place within intimate relationships, conflict is not inherently negative. Conflict characterizes intimate relationships regardless if they are distressed or not. It is the manner in which conflict is handled that results in negative relational consequences (O'Connell- Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). Somewhat paradoxically, conflict is a hallmark of intimate relationships, and can also be a major determinant of their decline. For example, intimate relationships are more likely to be physically and psychologically abusive than less intimate ones (see Roloff & Cloven, 1994). The transgressions that incite conflict, and the damaging behaviors that can occur during conflict, present serious challenges for partners and generally result in decreased relational satisfaction (Wills, Weiss, & Patterson, 1974). Given the certainty of hurtful and provocative events in intimate relationships, individual differences in response to relational disturbances are of special interest to the study of communication. Addressing this issue in research will assist communication scholars in understanding how the dynamics underlying conflict effect how they are handled.

Deutsch (1973) describes conflict as the existence of incompatible activity, where the behaviors of one relational partner prevent, obstruct, or make less likely or effective the behaviors of the other. Causes of interpersonal conflict are not limited to a particular source, issue, or outcome, and can vary to the extent that they "(1) reflect a positive or negative attitude toward the partner, (2) are intentionally or unintentionally enacted, and (3) are due to partners' traits or to circumstances" (Passer, Kelly, & Michela, 1978 c.f. Roloff & Cloven, 1994). Responses to these causes of conflict vary according to individual differences and situational circumstances. Studying the pattern of communication behaviors that take place during conflict and the perception partners have of those behaviors is integral to understanding the nature of conflict in romantic relationships (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

Research suggests that relationship cognitions can predict conflict behavior, particularly those conflict behaviors pertinent to relationship quality (Bradbury & Karney, 1993). Accordingly, Cloven and Roloff (1994) suggest that a focus on the cognitive processes that effect how partners make sense of their relational disputes may be a valuable framework for explaining and predicting the behaviors partners employ during conflict. The degree to which one is sensitive to rejection is one such process. Rejection sensitivity is a cognitive-affective processing disposition that accounts for individual differences in conflict behavior.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the possible associations between rejection sensitivity and specific types of behaviors used during conflict. Downey and Feldman (1996) consider conflict situations to be especially informative of rejection sensitivity because the circumstances surrounding conflict are likely to trigger anxious expectations of rejection, which is a key feature of this disposition. Theoretical conjectures and empirical evidence suggest that rejection-sensitive people are likely to perceive conflict episodes as opportunities for their

partners to reject them (Downey & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al., 1998). Because conflicts represent anxiety-provoking situations for rejection-sensitive people, their behavior during conflict is likely to reflect their aversion towards rejection through defensive reactions against the rejection source.

Before the connections between rejection sensitivity and conflict behavior are further discussed, an explanation of rejection and a description of the responses to rejection lay the basis for the propositions made about rejection sensitivity's impact during conflict. To begin, Chapter 2 presents a discussion of conflict style, conflict behavior, rejection, and rejection sensitivity. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the procedures employed to study these variables. Chapter 4 is a presentation of the results of all statistical analyses that were conducted, followed by Chapter 5, a discussion of those results and an interpretation of the findings. Chapter 6 offers a conclusion to the outcome of the study, as well as suggestions for the future research of the topics of interest.

Chapter 2: Conflict Styles, Conflict Behaviors, and Rejection Sensitivity

Individuals' responses during conflict are guided by the situational circumstances in which the conflict takes place. However, responses during conflict do not solely echo the circumstances surrounding the conflict itself, but also the personal characteristics possessed by those engaged in the conflict. Conflict behaviors are also an expression of personal variables that motivate and predispose individuals to respond to interpersonal problems in a particular way. Because partners continuously respond to one another during conflict, conflict behaviors are guided by both individual differences and situational circumstances. Personality characteristics influence which aspects of a situation an individual perceives to be especially meaningful and shape the responses that result.

Conflict Styles and Behaviors

Conflict styles are patterned responses that people use when in conflict. These responses are often conceptualized in terms of how much concern is afforded for the others involved and how much concern is afforded for the self (Rahim, 1983). A combination of these two dimensions yields five styles of managing interpersonal conflicts: integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, and avoiding. Each style is represented by a distinct repertoire of behaviors manifested during conflict. These conflict behaviors, or tactics, comprise each conflict style.

The integrating style represents a high concern for others as well as a high concern for oneself. The behavioral tactics representative of this style promote recognition of the interdependence between the parties involved. Through the use of analytic and conciliatory remarks, an individual employing this conflict style tries to persuade the other to cooperate in

finding a mutually favorable resolution. Analytic remarks emphasize collaboration through the use of any of the following tactics: descriptive statements (“I criticized you for getting mad at your parents” Sillars et al., 1982); disclosing statements (“I was in a bad mood that day” Sillars et al., 1982); qualifying statements (“We only have trouble communicating when we are tired” Sillars et al., 1982); solicitation of disclosure (“What were you thinking when you were sad?” Sillars et al., 1982); and solicitation of criticism (“Does it bother you when I stay up late?” Sillars et al., 1982). Conciliatory remarks are used to acknowledge one’s role in the conflict and promote reconciliation between the self and other. These behaviors are: supportive remarks (“I can see why you would be upset” Sillars et al., 1982); concessions (“I think I could work on that more” Sillars et al., 1982); and acceptance of responsibility (“I think we’ve both contributed to the problem” Sillars et al., 1982).

A low level of concern for others and a high level of concern for the self exemplify the dominating style. This style involves aggressive and uncooperative tactics in the pursuit of one’s own goals at the expense of the other’s. Direct confrontation is used in an effort to gain power, punctuated by attempts to win the argument without adjusting to the other’s goals. Persons using this style feel it necessary to engage the other in overt disagreement through personal criticism (“You are so inconsiderate” Sillars et al., 1982); rejection (“Oh, come on” Sillars et al., 1982); hostile imperatives (“If you don’t even try to look for a new job, don’t complain to me about it” Sillars et al., 1982); hostile jokes (“Every time you send be flowers, two days later I get the bill” Sillars et al., 1982); hostile questions (“Who does most of the work around here?” Sillars et al., 1982); presumptive remarks (“You purposely make yourself miserable” Sillars et al., 1982); and denial of responsibility (“That wasn’t my fault” Sillars et al., 1982).

The compromising style is characterized by a moderate concern for both self and other. An intermediate style that is partially assertive and cooperative, this style generally results in benefits and losses for all parties involved. Compromising behaviors are appeals to fairness (“We did what you wanted last time” Sillars et al., 1982); suggestions of a trade-off (“I won’t give up on my expectation that you repay me, but I will consider your working it off” Sillars et al., 1982); attempts to maximize wins and minimize losses (“I’ll give up on going to my parents for Christmas if we agree to go on a real vacation together” Sillars et al., 1982); and offers of quick, short-term solutions (“Since we don’t have time to gather all the data, how about if we do it my way for a month and then if you don’t like it we can go back to the old way” Sillars et al., 1982).

The obliging style reflects a high concern for the other and a low concern for oneself. Individuals who utilize this conflict style do not assert their personal needs in favor of pleasing the other. Behaviors characteristic of the obliging conflict style are giving up or giving in (“Have it your way;” “I don’t want to fight about this” Sillars et al., 1982); disengagement (“I don’t care” Sillars et al., 1982); denial of one’s needs (“I’ll be fine here. You go ahead” Sillars et al., 1982); or an expression of a desire for harmony (“Please, let’s just stop fighting” Sillars et al., 1982).

Lastly, the avoiding style signifies a low level for both others and ones’ self during conflict. As an alternative form of conflict expression, this style is elected to deflect, avoid, or not engage in a conflict. In intimate relationships, a partner might invoke this style during conflicts involving issues that he or she considers sensitive. Persons using this style may perceive that anything other than avoidance will elicit a negative response from the other party (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Conflict behaviors representative of the avoiding style include denial and equivocation (“There is no problem,” “That could be something to be upset over, but I don’t

know" Sillars et al., 1982); topic shifting and avoidance ("Let's talk about something else," "I don't want to talk about that" Sillars et al., 1982); noncommittal statements or questions ("What do you think?" Sillars et al., 1982); abstract remarks ("All people are irritable sometimes" Sillars et al., 1982); procedural remarks ("You aren't talking loudly enough" Sillars et al., 1982); and joking rather than dealing with the issue at hand.

While conflict has been widely studied in the communication field, researchers have yet to uncover all the facets of the communication that occur during this relational event. In particular, while conflict behaviors are typically treated as indicative of a patterned approach to conflict, conflict behaviors have not been studied across time to confirm the existence of persistent conflict styles. For this reason, the following research question is posed:

Research Question: Do conflict styles predict conflict behaviors?

A variety of factors can influence the way individuals behave during conflict with their romantic partners, which may make conflict behavior differ from conflict to conflict. While conflict behavior can be the result of stable factors, such as level of self-esteem (Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989), attachment style (Bippus & Rollin, 2003), and gender (Harris, 1993), they can also be influenced by qualities of the relationship, such as commitment, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction (Cramer, 2000). Different conflict behaviors may be used depending on characteristics of the conflict situation that they find personally salient. The interaction of dispositional qualities with situational characteristics is evident when personally salient aspects of a situation dispose an individual to behave in a particular way. Rejection sensitivity is a dispositional quality that not only guides which features of a conflict situation are especially relevant, but also the type of behavioral response such features tend to elicit from the individual.

Rejection

Rejection is a complex phenomenon that, despite its wide presence in interpersonal relationships, is challenging to define. At the most basic level, rejection is low, or negative, relational evaluation. Although it is frequently considered to be the counterpart to acceptance, dichotomizing rejection and acceptance is inaccurate because it overlooks the fact that degrees of rejection and acceptance exist (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006). Defining rejection is challenging because it occurs even in the face of acceptance. People feel rejected even though they recognize that their rejector accepts them on some level (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006).

To avoid these pitfalls, Leary (2001) conceptualizes acceptance and rejection along a continuum of relational evaluation. Relational evaluation is the degree to which another person regards his or her relationship with a partner as valuable, important, or close (Leary, 2001). When perceived relational evaluation exceeds a minimum criterion, individuals feel accepted. On the other hand, when perceived relational evaluation falls below that criterion, they experience rejection. This conceptualization accounts for those instances in which individuals feel rejected despite also knowing that they are liked, valued, and accepted. Rejection reflects the perception that a partner's relational evaluation is lower than what one desires, and it is an individual, rather than a dyadic, phenomenon. The rejection experience depends on one's perception of their partner's low level of acceptance, regardless of how much their partner rejects or accepts them in an objective sense. This appraisal underlies the subjective experience of rejection. Given that rejection is a universal event that occurs in all interpersonal relationships, the intensity of the subjective experience of rejection largely depends on individual differences. These differences are due to individuals' cognitions about their relationships and, more

specifically, in their readiness to perceive rejection and in the minor or imagined insensitivity of others (Feldman & Downey, 1994).

Rejection Sensitivity

Individuals who "anxiously expect, readily perceive, and overreact to rejection" (Downey & Feldman, 1996, p. 96) are considered to be rejection sensitive. Rejection sensitivity is a heightened anticipatory anxiety and expectation to be rejected by significant others in interpersonal relationships (Downey, & Feldman, 1996; Downey et al. 1998; Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). Conceptualized as a cognitive-affective processing disposition, rejection sensitivity shapes the values, concerns, interpretive biases, and self-regulatory strategies that motivate interpersonal behavior (Downey & Feldman, 1996). People who are disposed to perceive rejection in others' behavior tend to react in ways that compromise their relationships.

In its original conception, rejection sensitivity was proposed to develop from early experiences with rejection, leading the individual to expect rejection from significant others. These expectations, combined with the high value rejection-sensitive people place on avoiding rejection, cause anticipatory anxiety to be experienced when expressing needs or vulnerabilities to significant others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Conceptually, rejection sensitivity undeniably has strong roots in the attachment perspective. By proposing that rejection experiences in any type of relationship at anytime in one's life can produce expectations of rejection, the current explanation of rejection sensitivity is somewhat distanced from the attachment perspective (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). While the attachment perspective is concerned with global behavior tendencies, rejection sensitivity is context-sensitive. It is a disposition that must be activated by particular features in social situations. Incidentally, rejection sensitivity is not confined to a single attachment style and could be considered elemental to any non-secure

attachment pattern. Rejection sensitivity reflects a precise relationship belief, which allows researchers to test its role in intimate relationships.

In order to substantiate the claim that anxious expectations of rejection predict a readiness to perceive rejection in interpersonal situations, Downey and Feldman (1996) conducted an experiment wherein subjects were presented with an ambiguous situation that could be interpreted as either rejecting or benign. Following a pleasant interaction with a confederate, subjects were told that the confederate did not want to continue the experiment. No explanation of the confederate's decision was given, and it was hypothesized that those sensitive to rejection would report feelings of rejection in response to the confederate's decision. Results supported this hypothesis, indicating that those highest in rejection sensitivity showed the greatest increase in feelings of rejection. Being told that the confederate did not wish to continue the experiment induced feelings of rejection to the extent that participants were sensitive to rejection. This effect did not reflect greater emotional distress in general, and was behaviorally apparent to the experimenter who observed the manipulation. While those sensitive to rejection were likely to ruminate over what they had done to cause the confederate to reject them, those low in rejection sensitivity were not concerned with knowing what motivated the confederate's absence. Further, those low in rejection were more likely to attribute the confederate's behavior to non-personal, external causes (e.g. the confederate had a more pressing issue). It is important to note that high and low rejection-sensitive people did not differ in the control condition. Social interaction itself, in the absence of rejecting cues, did not induce feelings of rejection in even highly rejection-sensitive participants.

Downey and Feldman's (1996) findings support the theoretical assumption that rejection-sensitive people readily construe intentional rejection in ambiguous behavior. Rejection-sensitive

participants perceived intentional rejection when, in fact, rejection was not unequivocally present, suggesting that rejection-sensitive people have a lower threshold for rejection than others. As would be expected, this lowered threshold made them prone to a false alarm. Similar results were found in a subsequent study of romantic relationships where at least one partner was rejection-sensitive. It was revealed that rejection-sensitive partners were prone to interpret their new romantic partner's insensitive behavior, such as being inattentive or distant, as being motivated by hurtful intent (Downey & Feldman, 1996).

These findings signify that rejection sensitivity is not a global disposition. It is only activated in situations that afford the possibility of rejection by valued others. The anxious expectancies at the heart of rejection sensitivity induce hyper-vigilance to signs of rejection. When a rejection-sensitive individual detects rejection cues, however slight or vague, he or she is likely to perceive hostile intent. For that reason, aspects of seemingly innocuous or benign social interactions may be promptly perceived as signs of intentional rejection. Ayduk et al. (1999) more closely examined the notion that the behavior of the rejection sensitive is situation-dependent rather than indicative of a global disposition. Through the use of a sequential-priming-pronunciation task, it was found that thoughts of hostility are not chronically more accessible for high rejection-sensitive women than low rejection-sensitive women. However, when primed with thoughts of rejection, thoughts of hostility were more readily activated in high rejection-sensitive rather than in low rejection-sensitive women. Ayduk et al. (1999) contend that this finding demonstrates a specific, causal link between rejection and hostility at the mental representational level.

In order to verify that the hostile thoughts that are activated by rejection translate into hostile behavior, a second study was conducted. Female participants exchanged biographical

sketches with a potential dating partner, who, unbeknownst to them, was fictitious. After exchanging the sketches, participants were told that an interaction would take place over the Internet. In order to induce feelings of rejection, those in the experimental condition were told that the dating partner did not wish to continue the interaction. Those in the control condition were given the explanation that the interaction would not take place because of equipment failure. Rejection-sensitive participants in the experimental condition evaluated the partner's biographical sketch less positively than low rejection-sensitive women. Ayduk et al. (1999) interpreted the reduced positivity of participants' evaluations of their partner as indicative of a hostile response in the form of indirect retaliatory rejection. Participants in the control condition did not differ in their evaluations of the potential partner, demonstrating that rejection-sensitive participants differ from low rejection-sensitive women only when their partners reject them. Further, even when participants high and low in rejection sensitivity perceive similar levels of rejection, those high in rejection sensitivity reacted more strongly to it. Taken collectively, these findings suggest that rejection sensitivity does not reflect a hostile disposition. Rather, rejection-sensitive individuals' behavior reflects a person-by-situation interaction. Specific situational features activate this cognitive-affective processing disposition, which can then result in a hostile response. Rejection-sensitive people essentially react to the potential for rejection, discounting cues that signal alternative explanations for another's behavior. Attributing intentional rejection to others' behavior leads the rejection-sensitive individual to respond as if actual rejection has taken place. The chain of events leading to defensive, aggressive behavior is partially mediated by rejection-sensitive individuals' readiness to attribute harmful intent to others' actions.

Since conflicts represent situations where the potential for rejection is often fulfilled, and because the cognitive-affective process characteristic of rejection sensitivity predisposes

individuals to perceive rejection and overreact to it, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Rejection sensitivity will be positively associated with increased perceptions of conflict severity.

This hypothesis is based on the findings that anxious expectations of rejection lead to the attribution of negative or hostile intent to ambiguous behavior, which results in the perception and experience of rejection. During conflict, rejection-sensitive individuals are likely to interpret their partner's behavior negatively, and to perceive their partners to be more rejecting than individuals who are not sensitive to rejection.

Responses to Rejection.

The perception of rejection almost always produces emotional distress. Affective and behavioral responses to perceived rejection include anger, hostility, jealousy, hurt feelings, sadness, loneliness, guilt, embarrassment, social anxiety, emotional withdrawal, and dejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Many times people feel motivated to respond to rejection in pro-social ways in an attempt to restore acceptance, increase their relational value, and regulate the experience of negative affect (for a review see Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006). However, since many anger-producing situations involve feeling rejected, responses to rejection are not always so pro-social (Mabel, 1994). Individuals are more inclined to behave aggressively when rejection elicits anger, which, ironically, reduces their chances of acceptance and maintains negative feelings. In general, people who commit aggressive acts report greater feelings of rejection, and self-reported motives for aggressive behavior frequently involve the perception of rejection (For a review, see Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006).

The intensity of one's responses to rejection depends on the perception of how much, or little, the desired partner views the relationship as valuable and important. The minimum

criterion needed to feel relationally valued varies according to those involved; some need to feel more relationally valued than others. Kelly (2001) asserts that reactions to rejection must take into account the degree to which the individual desires others to value having relationships with them. Because of this, the same negative interpersonal event can elicit varying reactions from people. Even though a single negative event can lead two people to perceive the same level of low relational evaluation, they need not necessarily respond in the same way. If being relationally valued by the offending individual is not important, the individual is likely to have a weak reaction to the rejecting event. On the other hand, a person who desires to be valued by the offender would have a stronger reaction. The standards individuals use for assessing how much others value them are higher or lower to the extent that he or she desires to be relationally valued. Additionally, people differ in how they interpret interpersonal events. While some deem a particular event relevant to relational evaluation, others do not.

Leary (2001) contends that rejection from significant others evokes stronger reactions than similar rejections from acquaintances and strangers. This is because the most potent feelings of rejection result from events that imply relational devaluation. Devaluation refers to the perception that one's relational value has declined relative to some earlier time. As previously discussed, this explains why an individual can feel rejected even though he or she also believes that his or her partner still accepts him or her on some level. Reactions to devaluation vary in intensity according to relational characteristics, especially intimacy. Feeling less acceptance, warmth, or closeness elicits stronger reactions to rejection from partners in intimate relationships versus casual relationships. People feel the most hurt and rejected by those with whom they are significantly close (Leary et al. 1998; Miller, 1997). The more one feels valued, the more potential one has to drop in relational value (Leary, 2001). Individuals who are particularly

sensitive to rejection may be more likely to anxiously anticipate rejection as intimacy increases within a romantic relationship.

Anger, typical response to rejection, is considered to be the emotional basis for aggressive urges and actions. Buckley et al. (2004) examined the effects of interpersonal rejection and devaluation on anger by giving participants manipulated feedback from a confederate at 1-minute intervals as they talked about themselves for 5 minutes. Feedback was either consistently rejecting or accepting, or it became more accepting or rejecting. Those in the increasingly rejecting condition exhibited more anger than participants in any other group. These participants also reported feeling the least valued and accepted. A subsequent experiment found that compared to accepted participants, those who were rejected reported an increased desire to behave aggressively instead of pro-socially.

Similarly, Leary et al. (1998) found connections between the perception of rejection, feelings of anger, and aggressive behavior. Not surprisingly, the perception that another did not adequately value their relationship with the participants elicited hurt feelings. Those with hurt feelings reported growing angry, and 80% of them reported expressing their anger to the offending party. Of those, 62% percent reported that they responded to the person with a verbally aggressive message with the intention of being “critical or nasty.” This research shows a connection between the perception of rejection and the motivation to retaliate against the offender despite the benefit of behaving pro-socially. This link was mediated by negative evaluations, which was related to negative emotions. Factors that increase the likelihood of hurt feelings and anger should enhance the association between rejection and verbal aggression. Given the features of rejection sensitivity, it appears to be a factor that would amplify hurt feelings and anger in response to rejection. As such, rejection-sensitive individuals are likely to

perceive conflicts as more severe than those low in rejection sensitivity.

Responses of the rejection-sensitive.

Rejection sensitivity leads people to behave in ways that undermine their chances of maintaining a supportive and satisfying relationship. The very perception of rejection leads people to experience feelings of rejection, which can then prompt overreactions (e.g. hostility, withdrawal of support, and inappropriate attempts to control the rejecter's behavior) in the rejection sensitive. A pattern of unjustified and exaggerated responses has the potential to distress even satisfying relationships. Research supporting the claim that rejection sensitivity leads people to behave in ways that jeopardize their relationships confirmed that it is related to dissatisfaction in their intimate relationships (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Rejection-sensitive people exaggerated their partner's dissatisfaction and desire to leave the relationship. In turn, partners found the relationship less satisfying because of their rejection-sensitive partners' behaviors. Specifically, partners of rejection-sensitive men reported their dissatisfaction as being caused by his jealousy. Rejection-sensitive women were reported by their partners to be more hostile and emotionally unsupportive, which accounted for close to half of their dissatisfaction.

Results from Downey and Feldman (1996) demonstrated that rejection-sensitive individuals report a heightened concern about being rejected by their partners, regardless of their partner's commitment to the relationship. Additionally, rejection-sensitive people reported being less satisfied in their relationships than those low in rejection sensitivity, and their partners reported less relational satisfaction as well. This implies that those sensitive to rejection behave in ways that reflect their expectations and perceptions of rejection. However, rejection-sensitive people also perceived their partners to be more dissatisfied than they actually were. Magnifying their partner's dissatisfaction with the relationship may enhances rejection-sensitive individuals

tendency to behave in ways that perpetuate relational distress.

Rejection sensitivity and conflict. Situations defined by conflict can evoke relevant dispositional qualities. The situation itself then becomes a salient guide to behavior, allowing modes of behavior to occur that are differentially responsive to individual differences (Sandy, Boardman, & Deutsch, 2000). Mischel and Shoda (1995) advance this concept with the explanation that behavior is the outcome of a cognitive-affective personality system. According to this conceptualization, personality dispositions get activated in ways that influence behavior depending on the psychological meaning of the situation encountered. Situations that afford the possibility of rejection or negative relational evaluation activate anxious expectations of rejection in rejection-sensitive people. Conflict is a situation that is psychologically meaningful to these individuals, and is, therefore, a prime arena in which to examine the impact of rejection sensitivity on interpersonal behavior. For example, compared to those low in rejection sensitivity, highly rejection-sensitive people report feeling more anxiety in anticipation of conflicts with their romantic partners (Downey et al., 1998). The activations of this conflict-related anxiety makes the situation a salient guide to behavior.

Conflicts represent situations where the potential for rejection is especially potent. Conflicts evoke the rejection-sensitive disposition, which makes rejection sensitivity's role in how conflict is approached particularly telling. Ayduk et al. (2000) posit that, "anxious expectations of rejection, such as those elicited by conflict situations, cause [rejection-sensitive individuals] to engage in hostile behavior because they prompt them to readily perceive rejection; the perception of rejection, in turn, triggers a cognitive-affective overreaction that can emerge in hostile behavior" (p. 247). Elsewhere, devaluation, a subtle form of rejection, is argued to be characteristic of conflict (Katz, Beach, & Joiner 1998) and a viable trigger for the

highly rejection-sensitive. The predisposition to be threatened by conflict, coupled with an anxiety about rejection and the tendency to overreact, is likely to encourage behaviors that compromise successful conflict resolution.

In a study where couples were instructed to engage in a 20 minute videotaped conflict discussion, Downey et al. (1998) found that conflict has a greater negative impact on relationships where at least one partner is rejection-sensitive. It was revealed that even though partners of high and low rejection-sensitive women did not differ in how angry they felt prior to conflict, partners of rejection-sensitive women were significantly angrier after the conflict. It was also found that rejection-sensitive women behaved with more negativity during conflict than low rejection-sensitive women. How rejection-sensitive women behaved during the episode accounted for over half of rejection sensitivity's effect on their partner's anger. These results were found after controlling for relationship satisfaction and commitment.

Interestingly, rejection sensitivity in men did not significantly predict their conflict behavior or their partner's anger. A possible explanation for this finding is that women's behavior may vary according to other factors that may or may not be related to rejection sensitivity in their male partners. Other research suggests a gender difference in rejection-sensitive peoples' conflict behaviors. Results from a diary study conducted by Downey et al. (1998) show that conflict and women's rejection sensitivity interact to produce increased relationship dissatisfaction and thoughts of ending the relationship in their partners. Rejection-sensitive women also perceived their partners to be less accepting and more withdrawn than low rejection-sensitive women. However, this difference was not evident in rejection-sensitive men. Men's perceptions of their partner's behavior did not differ after days during which a conflict

had occurred. This gender difference may reflect a difference in men's and women's socialization towards conflict, as well as gender roles in romantic relationships.

While the aggressive response to negative evaluation characteristic of rejection sensitivity has been substantiated, research has yet to uncover the particular conditions that yield a withdrawn or pro-social response to rejection. During conflict, avoiding and obliging behaviors would signify this sort of response to rejection. Downey, Feldman, and Ayduk (2000) note that even those who are highly sensitive to rejection do not always angrily respond to perceived rejection. For example, some highly rejection-sensitive individuals may respond to perceived rejection with dejection and depression instead of anger. They speculate, "the predominant reaction experienced following perceived rejection may depend on whether they blame themselves or the other person for the rejection" (Downey, Feldman, & Ayduk, p. 58, 2000). Ayduk, Downey, and Kim (2001) propose that internalizing reactions may also underlie expressions of distress following rejection that are not hostile. Based on the preceding discussion, it was hypothesized that:

> H2: Rejection sensitivity will be positively associated with avoiding, obliging, or dominating conflict behaviors, but not with compromising or integrating conflict behaviors.

Those who are sensitive to rejection are motivated to avoid rejection from their partners, which may prompt avoiding or obliging conflict behaviors as attempts to promote acceptance from their partners and/or prevent rejection from them during conflict. While these behaviors evade rejection and function to promote acceptance, they are nonetheless maladaptive when consistently used to address relational problems.

Rejection sensitivity and aggression. While theoretically rejection-sensitive individuals use avoiding or obliging behavior to maintain their relationships, only a connection between rejection sensitivity and retaliatory hostility has been substantiated by research. In an attempt to delineate a link between rejection sensitivity and hostility in women, Ayduk et al. (1999) conducted a diary study to see if participants' rejection sensitivity would explain hostility towards their partners as a function of day-to-day feelings of rejection. Conflicts were used to index hostility. Previous research findings show that high rejection-sensitive individuals behave with more hostility than those low in rejection sensitivity (Downey et al., 1998). Highly rejection-sensitive women did not differ from those low in rejection sensitivity in terms of how many conflicts they reported over a four-week period. However, they reported higher average daily feelings of rejection than low rejection-sensitive participants. Furthermore, for low rejection-sensitive women, the likelihood of conflict was independent of whether or not they felt rejected on the previous day. Rejection-sensitive participants were more likely to report getting into conflicts with their romantic partners only after they reported feeling rejected. The likelihood of highly rejection-sensitive participants to report conflict increased if they reported feeling rejected the previous day, and decreased if they did not feel rejected.

A relationship between rejection and hostility has been found in men as well. In a study of rejection sensitivity and male violence, Downey, Feldman, and Ayduk (2000) documented a link between expectations of rejection and dating violence. Their results show that high relationship investment coupled with anxious expectations of rejection predict dating violence. These findings from a non-clinical, unselected sample of young adult males were analogous to empirical evidence that martially violent men are excessively concerned about the possibility of rejection (Dutton et al., 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe & Hutchison, 1993). Obviously, violent men

are not unique in experiencing rejection; rejection occurs in almost every significant relationship at some point in time. Though most men do not respond to rejection with violence, slight or imagined rebuffs can trigger a violent response from an abusive male partner (Walker, 1979). Violent husbands are exceptionally threatened by circumstances that imply the possibility that his wife will leave him and by his wife's attempts at independence (Dutton & Golant, 1995). These situations can trigger serious violence (Browne, 1988; Walker, 1979). Research reveals that when husbands kill their wives, the most common precipitant of the fatal incident is the husbands' perception of wives' rejection (Barnard, Vera, Vera, & Newman, 1982).

The presented research findings suggest a link between rejection and defensive behavior in the form of retaliatory hostility for some individuals. It is probable that sensitivity to rejection greatly increases the likelihood for aggressive behavior during conflict episodes for those who possess an aggressive temperament. Based on this assumption, it was hypothesized that:

H3: High scores of rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness will be positively associated with dominating conflict behaviors.

As a consequence to the perception of rejection, rejection-sensitive individuals who possess an aggressive disposition are likely to respond with hostility towards their partners, which can escalate conflict and further increase the possibility for conflict to be perceived as severe. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H4: High scores of rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness will be positively associated with perceptions of increased conflict severity.

In sum, rejection-sensitive partners are inclined to perceive intentional rejection in their partner's insensitive or ambiguous behaviors, to feel insecure and unhappy about their relationships, and to respond to perceived rejection or threats of rejection with hostility,

diminished support, jealousy, and controlling behavior. Because conflict episodes are likely to trigger anxiety and expectations of rejection, rejection sensitivity influences how partners respond to each other during such situations, and how they manage conflicts with their partners in general. Chapter 3 now turns to an explanation of the methods implemented to examine rejection sensitivity's role in conflict behavior. This includes a presentation of the study's design, a report of the procedures that were followed, and a description of the measures used.

Chapter 3: Method

Sample and Procedure

Fifty male and fifty female undergraduates enrolled at the University of Georgia, ranging in age from 18 years to 29 years (M= 20.3, SD=1.89), participated in the study. Eighty two percent of participants were Caucasian, 8% African American, 2% Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 2% "other". Eighty two percent of participants reported their partners as being Caucasian, 7% African American, 4% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 2% "other". Five percent of participants reported being a partner in an interracial relationship. Participants reported relationships spanning 2 to 273 weeks (M = 80 weeks, SD = 89.78).

In order to qualify for this study, participants were required to be members of romantic relationships. Participants were allowed to self-define what "romantic" meant in the context of a relationship, so as to maximize variance in this relational phenomenon. However, it was not necessary that participants be in serious romantic relationships. This was to ensure that individuals in romantic relationships of ambiguous nature would be able to participate, as these circumstances may pertain to the variables of interest for this study. While the majority of participants reported being in relationships bearing the "boyfriend/girlfriend" title (71%), relationship status varied somewhat across participants. Thirteen percent reported being in long distance relationships, 9% reported being in relationships that were not exclusive or "official," 3% reported living with their partners, 2% reported being engaged, and 2% reported being married.

An event-contingent diary design was considered to be the most appropriate method for this study. Diary methods have been used to study rejection sensitivity in the past (Downey &

Feldman, 1996). An obvious and major advantage of using a diary method was that it allowed the reported events and experiences to be assessed in relation to their natural, spontaneous conditions (Bolger et al., 2003). By minimizing the amount of time between the account of an experience and the experience itself, the risk of retrospection errors was very much reduced. Using single reports of participants' recollection of conflict episodes was likely to be tainted with biases. Secondly, the diary method enabled a better assessment of conflict behavior across time, which was integral in ascertaining the existence of conflict styles.

Participants were recruited from speech communication classes at the University of Georgia requiring research participation for course completion or offering research participation for extra credit. Upon their agreement to participate, all participants signed informed consent forms notifying them of their right to confidentiality and of their freedom to drop out of the study at any time. Participants then completed an initial asseesment that included demographic information (e.g. age, gender, race, partner's race, and relationship duration in weeks) and measures of rejection sensitivity, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and conflict style. Next, they were given a set of 4 diary packets and envelopes to take home. Each packet contained 5 sections for each conflict episode. Section A asked participants to give basic descriptive information about the conflict. Specifically, they were asked to report (a) how many days it had been since their last conflict, (b) what the conflict was about, (c) who instigated the conflict, and (d) how many times they had argued about the issue before. Participants then wrote a brief description of what happened during the conflict. Section B was comprised of seven items asking participants to report more detailed information about the conflict, such as who started it, and how they felt during the conflict. Section C was a twelve-item measure of perceptions of conflict severity. This section asked participants to rate how serious they considered the conflict to be. Section E was

an adapted version of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory II. This 22-item measure asked participants to report the extent to which their behavior reflected an integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, or avoiding behavior during the reported conflict episode.

Participants were requested to provide thier e-mail addresses so that they could be sent detailed written instructions and reminder e-mails throughout the month of the study. Participants were given the following instructions:

> Each time you and your partner have an argument, disagreement, or conflict during the next month, please take some time to answer the following questions. Try and answer these questions as soon as you can after the incident is over. It is best if you can do this right after the conflict takes place. If this cannot be done, answer the questions the same day the conflict took place. Only answer the questions if the conflict took place that day. In order to ensure your privacy, envelopes have been provided for you. Afrer completing an entry, seal it in an envelope.
>
> There are enough surveys for you to describe up to 4 conflicts that may occur between you and your partner during the next month. Keep in mind that every couple is different. You and your partner may engage in more or less than 4 conflicts next month. You may not need all four packets, or you may need more. If you need more packets, please e-mail the principal investigator at esbarrie@uga.edu.

Instructions were given verbally, printed on the first page of each packet, and sent to each participant via e-mail. An electronic version of the diary packet was e-mailed to all participants in case they had more than 4 conflicts to report, although none did. At the end of one month, participants turned in thier diary packets.

In total, 116 participants returned their diary packets. Sixteen participants were dropped from the study in favor of running analyses on a 100-person sample (50 male, 50 female). Sixteen female participants reporting only a single conflict during the 4-week period were eliminated. Eighty-seven participants reported having had a second conflict, 42 reported a third conflict, and 18 reported having had 4 conflicts during the 4-week period.

Measures in the Initial Assessment Battery

Rejection sensitivity questionnaire. (RSQ, Downey & Feldman, 1996). Initially developed from open-ended interviews, the RSQ measures the anxious expectations component of rejection sensitivity. In its development, undergraduates were asked what they anticipated would happen and how they would feel in hypothetical situations in which they made a request from a romantic partner, parent, or friend. Answers vary according to two dimensions: (a) degree of concern and anxiety about the outcome, and (b) expectations of acceptance and rejection (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Downey and Feldman (1996) reported that the RSQ is a normally distributed measure that taps a relatively enduring and coherent information-processing disposition. Test-retest reliability over a 2-3 week period was .83; over a 4-month period it was .78. Their study also demonstrated that rejection sensitivity was not redundant with conceptually and empirically related personality constructs such as adult attachment style, self-esteem, social anxiety, social avoidance, introversion, and neuroticism.

The RSQ consists of 18 hypothetical situations where rejection by a significant other is a possible outcome. Five items that did not address romantic relationships were removed. Two items were added to emphasize rejection sensitivity in romantic relationships: “You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to spend more time together” and “You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to pick your friend up from the airport.” An additional two items were included from the Adult Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire: “You bring up the issue of sexual protection with your significant other and tell him/her how important you think it is” and “You ask your significant other to move in with you” Participants unable to answer these items due to religious or moral reasons were given the option of responding “I could not see this happening” (See Appendix A).

Reliability analyses suggested that all items from the adapted 17-item measure could be retained (α = .87, M = 3.35, SD = .41).

Each item first asked people to indicate their degree of concern or anxiety about the outcome of each situation on a scale ranging from 1 (“very unconcerned”) to 5 (“very concerned”). Next they were asked to indicate the likelihood that the other person would respond in an accepting way (“I would expect that he/she would willingly agree to help me out”) on a scale ranging from 1 (“very unlikely”) to 5 (“very likely”). Higher scores indicated expectations of acceptance and low scores represent expectations of rejections. Lastly, participants reported how angry they would expect to feel if the desired outcome was not achieved, with 1 being “very angry” and 5 being “not angry at all.” This format replicates the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire- Children’s (Ayduk, et al., 2000). Scores for each hypothetical situation were obtained by summing the responses to the expected rejection, degree of anxiety, and expected anger items. The rejection sensitivity score was computed by dividing the sum of the 3 scores for each situation by the total number of situations.

Spouse specific assertion/aggression scale. (SSAA; O’Leary & Curley, 1986). The SSAA is a 29-item instrument that was developed to assess assertiveness and aggressiveness with one’s partner and compare it with the general assertion and aggression of individuals in physically abusive relationships (See Appendix B). For this study, items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 “extremely unlike me,” 5 “extremely like me”). Factor analysis shows that the scale measures two dimensions, with items corresponding with either assertiveness or aggressiveness. Seventeen items measure assertion and twelve-measure aggression. Chronbach’s alpha for the assertiveness scale has been found to be .87, and .82 for the aggression scale (O’Leary & Curley, 1986).

For this data set, factor analyses suggested that three items be dropped from the original 17-item measure of assertiveness ("In general, asserting myself with my significant other is something I often do, even though I don't think s/he would say or do anything negative to me," "I do not have trouble saying something that might hurt my significant other's feelings when I feel s/he has injured me," and "I often let my significant other know when I disapprove of his/her behavior"). The reliability coefficient for the 14-item measure was .73 (M = 3.56, SD = .50).

Factor analysis suggested that two items be dropped ("When my significant other tries to boss me around, I frequently do the opposite of what s/he asks" and "I often won't do what my significant other asks me to do if s/he asks me in a nasty way") from the original twelve-item measure of aggressiveness. Reliability for the remaining 10-items was acceptable (α = .81, M = 2.26, SD = .66).

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory- II (ROCI-II; Rahim, 1983). The ROCI-II was adapted to fit the focus of this study (See Appendix C). All items are situated within the context of participants' current romantic relationship. The ROCI-II is a 23-item measure of 5 conflict styles: integrating, avoiding, dominating, obliging, and compromising. Factor analysis has confirmed the construct validity of this instrument. Test-retest reliability after one week ranges from .60 to .83 (p < .0001). Internal consistency alphas range from .72 to .77 (Rahim, 1983). A marginal, but significant, relationship has been found between the integrating scale and scales of social desirability and lying. No other conflict style scales significantly correlate with social desirability and lying. The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II was administered to assess conflict style and conflict behavior.

For this data set, reliability was acceptable for the measures of the dominating, integrating, compromising, and avoiding conflict styles, but not obliging. Chronbach's alpha for

the five-item measure of the dominating style was .77 (*M* = 2.98, *SD* = .67). Factor analyses did not suggest that any items be dropped from the dominating conflict style measure. Chronbach's alpha for the integrating conflict style was .73 (*M*= 4.14, *SD* =.61). Factor analysis suggested that two items be dropped, making it a 2-item measure ("I try to integrate my ideas with my partner's to come up with a joint decision" and "I try to work with my partner to find solutions that satisfy both of our expectations"). For the 4-item measure of the compromising conflict style, Chronbach's alpha was .78. (*M* = 3.82, *SD* =.49). Factor analysis suggested that one item be dropped from the compromising conflict style measure. Sample items are "I propose a middle ground for breaking a deadlock" and "I negotiate with my partner to reach a compromise." For the obliging style, factor analysis suggested that two items be dropped. The remaining two items were "I try to satisfy my partner's needs" and "I go along with my partner's suggestions." Because reliability analysis revealed that these items did not comprise a reliable measure (*a* =.32), these items were added to the avoiding conflict style measure. Factor analysis suggested the 3 items be removed from the measure of the avoiding conflict style (α = .70). The remaining two items were "I try to stay away from disagreement with my partner" and "I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my partner." The reliability of the measure containing the combined obliging and avoiding items was .70 (*M* = 3.48, *SD* = .94).

Diary Measures

Conflict severity scale. This scale was created to assess how severe a problematic event is perceived to be. Samp and Solomon (1999) demonstrated the subjective nature of problematic events through the use of this scale. Participants who experienced a situation directly rated its severity differently than participants who rated the problematic event as if it was a hypothetical

situation. Rating problematic events with this scale showed that severity appraisal is not bound to the content of a situation, but is greatly determined by an individual's perception of the situation.

The Conflict Severity Scale was administered after each conflict (See Appendix D). One item was dropped from this scale ("This situation was no big deal"), making it an 11-item measure. The Conflict Severity Scale was a reliable measure for all conflict reports. Chronbach's alpha for the first conflict was .85 (*M* = 2.72, *SD* = .80), .89 (*M* = 2.81, *SD*= .86) for the second, .88 (*M*= 2.81, *SD* =.86) for the third, and .85 (*M* = 2.53, *SD* = .77) for the fourth.

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory- II (ROCI-II; Rahim, 1983). The ROCI-II was adapted to assess conflict behavior (See Appendix E). Factor analysis recommended that one item be removed from the dominating conflict behavior measure. Chronbach's alpha of the resulting 4-item measure was .78 (*M*= 2.70, *SD* =.79) for the first conflict, .85 (*M* = 2.80, *SD* =.92) for the second conflict, .90 (*M* = 2.50, *SD* = 1.10) for the third conflict, and .70 (*M* = 3.00, *SD* =.84) for the fourth conflict.

Factor analyses recommended that two of the four items comprising the integrating conflict behavior measure and three items of the five items comprising the compromising conflict behavior measure be combined. Chronbach's alpha for the resulting 5-item measure was .87 (*M* = 3.28, *SD* =.79) for the first conflict, .89 (*M*= 3.10, *SD* =.81) for the second, .91 (*M* = 3.10, *SD* =.91) for the third, and .95 (*M* = 2.70, *SD* = 1.10) for the fourth conflict.

Factor analyses recommended that three items be removed from the measure of avoiding conflict behavior. The remaining items from the 2-item measure were "I tried to stay away from disagreement from my partner" and "I tried to avoid and unpleasant exchange." Chronbach's alpha for this measure during the first conflict was .70 (*M* = 3.04, *SD* =. 10), .78 (*M* = 2.84, *SD*

=1.10) for the second, .80 (*M*= 3.07, *SD* =1.15) for the third, and .80 (*M*= 2.50 *SD* = 1.20) for the fourth conflict.

To review, all the measures used in the initial assessment battery and in the diary reports were confirmed to be reliable for this data set. The repeated measures were also confirmed to be reliable at each conflict report.

Chapter 4: Results

Preliminary Analyses

Zero-order correlations for all variables across individuals are presented in Table 1-3. Table 1 reports the zero-order correlations between personality variables and conflict episode variables. Personality variables included rejection sensitivity, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and conflict style. In table 1, the conflict episode variables refer to both the conflict behaviors and perceptions of conflict severity from each report. Tables 2 and 3 provide information for the conflict episode variables accordingly. Table 2 shows the zero-order correlations among the conflict behaviors from each report. Table 3 reports the zero-order correlations between conflict severity perceptions and conflict behaviors from each report.

Several correlations revealed by this preliminary analysis suggest the existence of an approach-avoidance attitude towards conflict, which may be influenced by aggressiveness and assertiveness. Aggressiveness was positively associated with the dominating conflict style (r = .53, $p < .01$), and assertiveness was negatively correlated with the avoiding conflict style (r = -.38, $p < .01$). The dominating conflict style was positively associated with dominating conflict behavior in the first, second, and third conflict reports (report 1: r = .53, report 2: .54, report 3: .45, $p < .01$). Likewise, the avoiding conflict style was associated with avoiding behavior in the second, third, and fourth conflict reports (report 1: r = .51, report 2: .44, report 3: .70, $p < .01$). This gives initial insight to the research question regarding the extent to which conflict styles predict behavior during conflict. Based on this preliminary analysis, it appears that only the dominating and avoiding conflict styles predict conflict behavior. This is compatible with the idea that individuals are motivated to either approach arguments because they find them exciting, or to avoid them because they consider them upsetting (Hample, 2005). Aggressiveness may

increase the probability that an individual will be motivated to approach conflict, and a low level of assertiveness may increase the chances that an individual will be motivated to avoid it.

Rejection sensitivity was positively correlated with integrating conflict style ($r = .20$, $p < .05$). While this does not provide preliminary evidence in support of Hypothesis 2, it may reflect that rejection-sensitive individuals highly value their intimate relationships, especially since these relationships provide the potential for acceptance. This corresponds with the conceptual description of rejection-sensitive people (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001). However, in this data set rejection sensitivity was not consistently correlated with conflict behavior corresponding to the integrating style. Further, rejection sensitivity was positively correlated with aggressiveness ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), and was positively associated with dominating conflict behavior in the first conflict report ($r = .35$, $p < .01$). Taken together this suggests that rejection sensitivity is associated with an intention to use integrating tactics in order to preserve valued relationships and avoid further rejection, but the circumstances of conflict may lead rejection-sensitive individuals to behave in reaction to rejection. This is consistent theoretical conjectures about rejection sensitivity's role in intimate relationships, and it also suggests that the findings from this data set corroborate research findings linking rejection expectancies to negative behavioral and interpersonal outcomes, despite the motivation to evade rejection (Ayduk et al., 1999; Ayduk, Downey, & Kim, 2001; Downey & Feldman, 1996)

Aggressiveness was positively correlated with perceptions of conflict severity in the first, second, and third conflict reports ($r = .25, .25, .37$, $p < .05$). Prior research has found that aggressive individuals are more likely to be verbally aggressive during conflict with their romantic partners (Infante et al., 1990; Sabourin, et al., 1993). Because verbal aggression leads to reciprocation and to conflict escalation (Atkin, et al. 2002; Infante et al., 1990), conflicts

involving verbal aggression are likely to be perceived as severe by one or both partners. Since rejection sensitivity was related to aggressiveness, this lends partial support for hypothesis 4, which stated that rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness would be positively associated with perceptions of conflict severity.

An independent samples *t* test was used to test the effects of gender on scores of rejection sensitivity, assertiveness, aggressiveness, conflict style, conflict behavior, and perception of conflict severity (see Table 4). It was revealed that females (M= 3.48, SD= .41) were more sensitive to rejection than males (M= 3.23, SD=.34), $t(98)$, $p < .01$. This was the only gender difference that reached significance. Other factors were not found to influence the relationship between variables.[1, 2]

Tests of Hypotheses

Overview of hierarchical multilevel modeling

Regression analysis, tested through hierarchical linear modeling, was used to test the hypotheses because multiple levels exist within the data. This kind of model purports that an individual's outcomes are a function of his or her own predictor variables. The diary data acquired in this study have a multilevel structure in that each diary recording (e.g., reports of conflict severity ratings and conflict behaviors) can be considered lower-level units nested under upper-level unit persons (which also includes person-level personality variables).

Multilevel modeling is a class of methods that takes hierarchical structure into account and enables the simultaneous estimation of the influence of variables from different levels (e.g., between and within person effects) and their cross level interactions on the outcomes of interest (Raudenbush & Byrk, 2002). These methods are more precise and efficient than the more traditional least squares estimation when the number of observations per person is unbalanced

(e.g., a different number of diary recordings per person) by placing greater weight on those participants who provides more information). Furthermore, the use of multilevel modeling does not require an equal number of observations per person, thereby accommodating differential number of diary entries between subjects. It also treats predictor variables more appropriately as random, rather than fixed, effects, enabling the generalization of results to the population from which participants were samples.

Hierarchical multilevel modeling can be understood intuitively as a two-stage series of iterative regressions (Raudenbush & Byrk, 2002). At the first level of the analysis (Level 1), the relationship between the within-person variables (e.g., reports of conflict severity and conflict behaviors) is investigated by regressing the criterion on the predictors for each person in the study. At the second level (Level 2), the parameters estimated at Level 1 (intercepts and slopes) are regressed onto the Level 2 variables (e.g., rejection sensitivity, assertiveness, and aggressiveness). A random error term is introduced in the Level 2 equations for both intercept and slope; this represents the random effect component that enable generalizations beyond the sample in this study. The student version of HLM 6.04 (Raudenbush, et al., 2004) was used to construct the hierarchical linear models needed to test the hypotheses.

The research question inquired about the persistence of conflict behaviors in comprising conflict styles. Table 5 reports the results the multilevel regression used to answer this query, in which conflict behavior scores for each report were regressed on conflict style scores. As the preliminary analyses implied, only the dominating and avoiding conflict styles were significantly and positively associated with their corresponding conflict behaviors. Because these were the only styles found to predict behavior, this lends further support for the approach-avoid stance suggested by the zero-order correlations.

Hypothesis 1. H1 stated that rejection sensitivity is related to increased perceptions of conflict severity. Table 6 reports the results of a multilevel regression in which conflict severity scores were regressed on each conflict report at Level 1, and individuals' slopes and intercepts were regressed on their rejection sensitivity scores at Level 2. Hypothesis 1 was not supported; perceptions of conflict severity were not influenced by how sensitive to rejection participants were.

Hypothesis 2. H2 stated that rejection sensitivity is associated with avoiding, obliging, or dominating conflict behaviors, but not with the compromising or integrating behavior. In order to test this hypothesis, scores on the ROCI-II subscales were regressed on RSQ scores. This hypothesis was partially supported. Rejection sensitivity was significantly, positively related to dominating conflict behavior, but was not significantly related to the other types. Table 6 reports the results of the multilevel regression used to test hypotheses 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 3. H3 stated that aggressiveness and rejection sensitivity would interact to produce dominating conflict behavior. In order to test whether rejection sensitivity and aggression interact in predicting the dominating conflict behavior, scores on the dominating conflict behavior subscale were regressed on participants' RSQ and aggressiveness scores. While dominating conflict behavior was significantly associated to both rejection sensitivity and to aggressiveness, the two did not interact in influencing the use of dominating conflict behavior. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 4. H4 stated that rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness would interact to produce increased perceptions of conflict severity. In order to test this hypothesis, scores on the Conflict Severity Scale were regressed on scores on RSQ and SSAA assertiveness and aggressiveness scores. While perceptions of conflict severity were significantly, positively

correlated with aggressiveness (R = .31, p < .001), aggressiveness did not interact with rejection sensitivity to influence increased perceptions of conflict severity. Therefore, this hypothesis was not supported. Table 7 reports the results of the multilevel regression used to test this hypothesis.

Table 1
Zero Order Correlations between Personality Variables and Conflict Episode Variables

Note. N =100 for personality variables (rows 1-7). N ranged from 18 to 100 on variables related to conflict event reports. * p<.05. ** p<.01. *** p<.001.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. RS	1.00						
2. Assertiveness	.14	1.00					
3. Aggressiveness	.31**	.16	1.00				
Conflict Style							
4. Integrating	.20*	.14	-.06	1.00			
5. Dominating	.17	.01	.53**	-.15	1.00		
6. Compromising	.04	.01	-.26**	.60**	-.25*	1.00	
7. Avoiding	-.05	-.38**	-.07	.11	.02	.19	1.00
Conflict A Behavior							
8. Dominating	.35**	.10	.19	-.01	.53**	-.09	.10
9. Compromising	.11	.10	.05	.16	.04	.22*	.10
10. Avoiding	.02	-.24*	.02	.08	.01	.10	.36**
Conflict B Behavior							
11. Dominating	.21	.23*	.23*	-.02	.54**	-.19	.10
12. Compromising	-.09	.03	.06	.10	-.19	.05	.13
13.Avoiding	-.01	-.35**	.02	-.01	-.01	.15	.51**
Conflict C Behavior							
14. Dominating	-.05	-.16	.28	-.16	.45**	-.44**	.22
15. Compromising	.33*	.10	-.04	.10	-.36*	.08	.03
16.Avoiding	.08	-.10	.08	.19	-.12	.20	.44**
Conflict D Behavior							
17. Dominating	-.05	.23	-.01	-.12	.28	-.33	-.28
18. Compromising	.19	.34	.16	.13	-.23	.13	-01
19. Avoiding	.31	-.22	.25	-.02	-.24	-.02	.70**
Conflict Severity							
20. Conflict A	.08	-.21*	.25*	.10	.20*	-.10	.08
21. Conflict B	.14	-.02	.25*	-.01	.15	-.11	-.05
22. Conflict C	.16	-.17	.37*	-.06	.27	-.23	.19
23. Conflict D	-.18	-.40	.17	.03	-.01	.10	.53*

Table 2
Zero Order Correlations between Conflict Behaviors from each Conflict Report

Note. N =100 for personality variables (rows 1-7). N ranged from 18 to 100 on variables related to conflict event reports. * p<.05. ** p<.01. *** p<.001.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Conflict A Behavior												
1. Dominating	1.00											
2. Compromising	.08	1.00										
3.Avoiding	-.11	.22*	1.00									
Conflict B Behavior												
4. Dominating	.55**	.10	-.02	1.00								
5. Compromising	-.07	.30**	.16	-.03	1.00							
6.Avoiding	.02	.08	.45*	-.11	.12	1.00						
Conflict C Behavior												
7. Dominating	.06	-.02	-.01	.28	-.10	.19	1.00					
8. Compromising	.27	.25	-.02	-.07	.49**	.04	-.09	1.00				
9.Avoiding -.01	-.01	.34*	.38*	.08	.30	.21	-.20	.09	1.00			
Conflict D Behavior												
10. Dominating	.11	.13	.09	-.15	.14	-.02	.12	.46	-.22	1.00		
11. Compromising	-.10	-.30	-.41	-.06	.23	-.37	.21	.19	-.19	-.24	1.00	
12. Avoiding	.04	-.04	.06	.03	-.10	.25	.50*	.08	.57*	-.40	.13	1.00

Table 3
Zero Order Correlations between Conflict Perceptions and Conflict Behaviors from each Conflict Report

Note. N =100 for personality variables (rows 1-7). N ranged from 18 to 100 on variables related to conflict event reports. * p<.05. ** p<.01. *** p<.001.

	1	2	3	4
Conflict Severity				
1. Conflict A	1.00			
2. Conflict B	.31**	1.00		
3. Conflict C	.60**	.50**	1.00	
4. Conflict D	.01	-.01	.12	1.00
Conflict A Behavior				
5. Dominating	.06	.05	.01	.09
6. Compromising	-.19	.17	-.01	-.06
7. Avoiding	.01	-.06	-.12	.12
Conflict B Behavior				
8. Dominating	.15	.17	.16	-.12
9. Compromising	-.12	-.05	.09	-.03
10. Avoiding	-.04	-.06	.01	.29
Conflict C Behavior				
11. Dominating	.19	.02	.15	.17
12. Compromising	-.07	.08	.04	.11
13. Avoiding	.01	.28	.04	.48*
Conflict D Behavior				
14. Dominating	-.12	.06	-.01	.24
15. Compromising	.23	.22	.17	-.30
16. Avoiding	.24	.19	.31	.40

Table 4
T-Test for Sex Differences across Personality and Conflict Episode Variables

Note. N =100 (50 males, 50 females); 247 observations (conflict 1= 100, conflict 2= 87, conflict 3= 42, conflict 4= 18). * p <.01

				Males		Females	
	t	*df*	*p*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Rejection Sensitivity	-3.20	98	.01*	3.22	.37	3.50	.41
Assertiveness	-1.30	98	.20	3.50	.44	3.60	.55
Aggressiveness	-1.52	98	.14	2.10	.63	2.29	.71
Conflict Style							
Integrating	-.90	98	.37	4.10	.50	4.20	.71
Dominating	.30	98	.77	3.00	.72	3.00	.63
Compromising	.51	98	.61	3.84	.50	3.80	.48
Avoiding	1.88	98	.06	3.65	.78	3.30	1.06
Conflict 1 Behavior							
Dominating	-.41	98	.68	2.64	.77	2.70	.80
Compromising	.87	98	.39	3.35	.74	3.21	.83
Avoiding	.20	98	.84	3.10	1.00	3.00	1.00
Conflict 2 Behavior							
Dominating	.70	85	.48	2.90	.92	2.80	.92
Compromising	1.20	85	.23	3.20	.79	3.00	.83
Avoiding	1.78	85	.08	3.10	1.00	2.67	1.14
Conflict 3 Behavior							
Dominating	.68	40	.50	2.70	1.21	2.43	.93
Compromising	.87	40	.39	3.00	.96	3.10	.89
Avoiding	1.30	40	.21	3.32	1.04	3.00	1.21
Conflict 4 Behavior							
Dominating	.48	16	.64	3.13	1.20	2.90	.76
Compromising	-1.23	16	.24	2.10	.83	2.82	1.00
Avoiding	-.69	16	.50	2.13	1.44	2.60	1.20
Conflict Severity							
Conflict 1	.73	98	.47	2.78	.82	2.70	.76
Conflict 2	-.17	85	.88	2.80	.87	2.83	.87
Conflict 3	-.09	40	.93	2.82	.90	2.84	.83
Conflict 4	.32	16	.75	2.65	.47	2.50	.84

Table 5
Multilevel Regression for Conflict Style as Predictor of Conflict Behavior

Note. N = 100 individuals (247 observations). * p <.05. ** p <.01. *** p <.001.

	Predictor				
Level 1 predictor	Intercept	Dominate	Avoid	Compromise	Integrate
Conflict Behavior:					
Dominating	2.70	.64***	.07	-.29*	.13
Avoiding	2.94	-.10	.53***	.07	-.10
Compromising	3.16	-.10	.07	.08	.11

Table 6
Multilevel Regression for Predicting Conflict Behavior from Rejection Sensitivity and Aggression

Note. N = 247 observations. * p <.05. ** p <.01. *** p <.001.

	Predictor							
Level 1 predictor	Intercept	RS	Assertive	Aggressive	RS x Assert x Aggress	RS x Aggressive	Assertive x Assertive	RS x Aggressive
Conflict Behavior:								
Dominating	2.69	.52***	-.85	.26**	.62	.47	.20	-.16
Avoiding	2.94	.10	.75	4.35	-.93	-1.10	-.28	.22
Compromising	3.15	.15	1.94	4.00	-1.10	-.98	-.41	.32

Table 7
Multilevel Regression for Predicting Perceptions of Conflict Severity from Rejection Sensitivity and Trait Aggression

Note. The careful reader may notice that not all betas approached significance, although they were similar values. Because the betas are unstandardized, they cannot be compared to one another.

N = 247 observations. * p <.05. ** p <.01. *** p <.001.

	Predictors							
Level 1 predictor	Intercept	RS	Assertive	Aggressive	Assert x Aggress	RS x Aggressive	RS x Assertive	Assertive x RS x Aggressive
Conflict Severity	2.73	.15	.57	2.15	-.53	-.62	-.37	.18

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of Statistical Analyses

Because the diary data had a multilevel structure, each conflict report was a lower-level unit nested within each individual, the upper level unit. The upper level unit included all the person-level variables, or personality traits (e.g. rejection sensitivity, aggressiveness, and conflict style). Disaggregating the data, or treating each variable independently would have ignored the nesting in the data structure, which can bias the results by increasing the risk of Type 1 error. As such, HMLM aggregated the data across individuals, and then related them to the person-level variables. The use of HMLM was necessary because the difference in the number of observations per person would have lead to incorrect estimates of standard errors and significance levels. Multilevel modeling takes the data structure into account and allows the simultaneous estimation of the influence of variables from different levels, permitting both between and within person effects to be examined, as well as their cross level interactions. These are more precise methods when the number of observations per person is unbalanced, because it places more weight on those participants who provided more information. Because HMLM does not require an equal number of observations, it accommodates differential numbers of diary entries between subjects. Essentially, it allows the estimation of multivariate normal models from incomplete data. Predictor variables are treated as random effects rather than fixed effects, allowing the generalization of results to the population from which the participants were sampled.

What this meant for this study was that participants' reports on the ROCI-II and the conflict severity scale were not considered to be independent of one another. This is because it was assumed that conflict behavior and perceptions would be the outcome of personal

characteristics. Conflict reports were also not considered to be independent of one another because the conflicts occurred in intimate, interdependent relationships. At level 1, the relationship between conflict severity reports and conflict behavior reports were investigated by regressing conflict severity reports on conflict behavior reports for each participant. At level 2, the intercepts and slopes estimated at level 1 were regressed on rejection sensitivity, aggressiveness, and assertiveness. Perception of conflict severity was a lower level predictor (X), and conflict behavior was a lower level outcome (Y). Rejection sensitivity, trait aggressiveness, and conflict style were upper level predictor variables, assessed once for each participant (Z). These variables were grand centered, and as such they equaled the average relationship between conflict severity perceptions (X) and conflict behavior (Y).

Conflict Style and Conflict Behavior

The research question was inquired about the extent to which conflict style actually predicts behavior from conflict to conflict. The dominating and avoiding styles were the only approaches to conflict that appeared to predict behavior. Not surprisingly, the dominating style was positively related to aggressiveness, and the avoiding style was related to unassertiveness. The dominating style was also negatively correlated with compromising conflict behavior, which is not unexpected since the dominating style precludes any behaviors that address the needs of the other. As previously mentioned, this implies a generalized fight-or-flight predisposition towards conflict. Hample (2005) explains that those inclined to “fight” approach conflict because they consider it have a positive valence. Likewise, people who are predisposed to take “flight” avoid conflicts because they do not find them enjoyable and view them with a negative valence. This fight or flight interpretation of the dominating and avoiding conflict styles also compliments Sandy, Boardman, and Deutch’s (2000) conceptualization of conflict resolution strategies as

corresponding to psychological needs. The "fight" strategy is motivated by the needs to deflect blame or criticism, maintain respect, or obtain attention. The "flight" strategy is used in the fulfillment of safety and security needs, protection from anxiety, and fear of rejection. The lack of significant findings for the compromising and integrating conflict styles might signify that these behaviors are situation-dependent. Interestingly, integrating conflict style scores were relatively high, although integrating behavior scores were not. This suggests that participants' intentions to handle conflict constructively exceeded their actual behavior.

Rejection Sensitivity and Conflict

Prior research examining rejection sensitivity demonstrates that it is a dispositional quality that amplifies hurt feelings and anger in response to rejection. Consequently, it was hypothesized that this would be because rejection-sensitive individuals perceive conflicts as more severe than those low in rejection sensitivity. This fell in line with research revealing that rejection sensitive people are much more inclined to perceive rejection in others' behavior and tend to react in ways that compromise their relationships. Their overreactions to rejection are especially manifest during conflict, during which their unjustified and exaggerated behavior has been shown to increase their partners' anger and decrease their relational satisfaction (Downey & Feldman, 1998). However, it is logical to assume that their aversion to rejection could also motivate them to behave in a less antagonistic fashion so as to protect themselves from further rejection. Consistent with prior research on rejection sensitivity and conflict, and consonant with the conceptual basis of rejection sensitivity, it was hypothesized that rejection sensitive individuals would employ dominating, obliging, or avoiding conflict behavior. However, the findings of this data set did not support the proposed depiction of rejection sensitivity's role in conflict behavior.

Contrary to H1, rejection sensitivity was not related to perceptions of conflict severity, indicating that rejection-sensitive participants were not more likely to consider conflict with their romantic partners to be of great importance. Rejection sensitive individuals' behavior during conflict with their romantic partners was independent of how serious, or trivial, they considered the conflict to be. Contrary to H2, rejection sensitivity was only significantly related to dominating conflict behavior. Together this reveals that rejection sensitive individuals employed dominating conflict behavior with their partners even when they considered the conflict to be relatively unimportant.

Ostensibly, these findings are surprising because it is counter to what previous research implies about relationship cognitions and conflict severity appraisals. Samp and Solomon (2001) speculate that one's perception of event severity may be intensified to the degree that one is concerned with being abandoned by one's partner. However, this data showed that conflict severity was not intensified by anxious expectations of rejection; while the predictions of this study were not supported, the results of H1 and H2 are actually quite consistent with rejection sensitivity's conceptual definition and previous empirical findings. Rejection sensitivity is characterized by overreactions to rejection. That rejection-sensitive participants used dominating conflict behavior in conflicts of minor importance just as often as they did in ones of greater severity is evidence that they overreacted, and shows that rejection-sensitive partners do not overreact during conflict because of am exaggerated perception of seriousness. Conflict severity appears to be unimportant in how conflict is handled by rejection-sensitive individuals. This is evident in the finding that when high and low rejection-sensitive people perceive similar levels of rejection, those high in rejection sensitivity react more strongly to it (Ayduk et al., 1999). This reflects the current finding that rejection-sensitive partners do not perceive conflicts to be more

severe in general, but nonetheless react strongly to it. It seems that anxiety over being rejected does not necessarily cloud perceptions of conflict severity, but instead facilitates behavioral overreactions.

Intimacy may motivate rejection sensitive people to be more reactive as increased value is placed on the relationship. Further, the interdependence that characterizes intimacy might allow rejection sensitive partners to behave with a low concern for their partners and a high concern for themselves without the immediate consequence of their partners leaving them. Indeed, there is evidence that rejection sensitivity interacts with romantic investment in the production of dating violence, and that that connection between rejection expectancies and aggression is especially pronounced in intimate relationships (Downey, Feldman, Ayduk, 2000). Conflicts occurring in interpersonal relationships in less intimate domains may yield more variability in the conflict behavior of the rejection sensitive. Less intimate relationships, such as friendships or work relationships, may yield avoiding or obliging conflict behavior. Support for this claim lies in finding that the experience of conflict differs depending on the relationship context in which it occurs (e.g. friendship, romantic, relatives) (Canary et al., 1993).

As the current findings and previous research demonstrate, dominating conflict behavior is undeniably a hallmark of rejection-sensitive partners' intimate relationships. This coincides with conflict behavior associated with non-secure attachment styles. Given that rejection sensitivity is a component of non-secure attachment, it is not surprising that Creasy, Kershaw, and Boston (1999) found that ambivalent participants were more likely to report disagreements with intimates that involved angry, out-of-control arguments. The researchers cite that this is in line with conceptual descriptions of the ambivalent attachment style, especially that they "react to potential relationship loss/stress with anger and hostility as a vehicle to invoke guilt or

sympathy from the attachment figure" (Creasy, Kershaw, & Boston, 1999, p. 538). The function of aggressive behavior in conflicts involving dating partners sheds light on why rejection-sensitive partners engage in self-defeating conflict behavior. Katz, Jones, & Beach (2000) argue that a typical cause for engaging in aggressive behavior is to force submission, and thereby prevent further emotional or physical harm. Rejection-sensitive individuals, therefore, appear to be more directly motivated to halt their partners from rejecting them than to behave in ways that will elicit acceptance. Additionally, research shows the dominating conflict style is associated non-secure forms of adult attachment that are marked by the inability to take another's perspective (O'Connell-Corcoran & Mallinkrodt, 2000). It is probable that it is difficult for rejection-sensitive people to take their partner's perspective when in a heightened state of arousal due to conflict. A low concern for the other party and a high concern for the self is the basis for behavior of the dominating type. This conflict behavior may be the result of the inability of the rejection-sensitive to devote the cognitive effort necessary for perspective taking when the disposition is activated.

Cognitive processes and rejection sensitivity

At a basic level, rejection-sensitive people's strong urge to evade rejection is what disposes them to behave in self-defeating ways. The explanation of rejection sensitivity from a cognitive standpoint elucidates its relationship with maladaptive behavior. Rejection sensitivity is a dynamic configuration of intersecting expectations, encodings, and affects that are activated by the psychological features of an interpersonal situation (Ayduk et al., 2000). When a rejection-sensitive person enters a situation where the possibility for rejection is high and is personally salient, he or she automatically feels threatened. In this highly aroused negative affective state, the rejection-sensitive person's attentional focus is narrowed. Moreover, such a

state prepares them to react to threatening cues automatically, at the expense of cognitive, contemplative responses. In sum, for the rejection sensitive, perceived rejection elicits reflexive responses in the absence of rational problem solving. Their dominating conflict behavior is not due to a deficit in productive conflict resolution skills or in a lack of motivation to behave otherwise. Participant 26, a highly rejection-sensitive individual, exemplifies this in her description of a conflict she had with her partner over cancelled plans: "I spent the rest of the whole day really upset and frustrated [after the initial discussion]. After taking some time to calm down and thing rationally…I realized it wasn't completely necessary for us to spend both weekends together…When I talked to [my partner] later that evening, I admitted that I was once upset, but thought it through and understood… I was basically worked up over nothing." It was not until she was in a less aroused state that she was able to "think rationally," understand her partner's point of view, and be accommodating.

This is not unlike other cognitive processes that have been shown to occur during conflict. For example, in their study of repetitive non-optimal behaviors, Turk and Monahan (1999) posit that loss of cognitive control and negative arousal overload result in the reliance on well-established behavior patterns, decreasing one's ability to formulate alternative, more adaptive ways to manage conflict. It is estimated that the instigation of strong emotions causes excessive arousal, which then produces an impairment of cognitive guidance for behavior (Zillman, 1990). Consequently, cognitive impairment promotes a reliance on well-established behavior patterns (Turk & Monahan 1999). Logically, arousal increases in conjunction with the perception of threat, causing individuals to become increasingly less proficient at devising constructive coping responses because they require complex cognitive effort. Much practiced

and well-rehearsed reactions, such as the use of dominating conflict behavior, constitute a default when cognitive capacities are reduced.

Trait Aggression and Conflict

H3 stated that aggressiveness and rejection sensitivity would interact to produce dominating conflict behavior. However, rejection sensitivity and trait aggression were independently related to dominating conflict behavior. This means that rejection sensitive and aggressive partners cannot be differentiated based on the way they behave during conflict, which extends the notion that rejection sensitivity and trait aggression only lead to analogous behaviors in situations where the rejection-sensitive disposition is activated. This is affirmed by prior research demonstrating that rejection sensitivity is not a global disposition, but must be provoked. This demonstrates that rejection sensitivity and trait aggression are distinct constructs.

H4 stated that rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness would interact to produce perceptions of conflict severity. As previously discussed, however, trait aggression was related to perceptions of conflict severity and rejection sensitivity was not. This indicates that the more aggressive participants were, the more likely they were to consider conflict with their romantic partners to be serious. The following excerpts from participant 141, an aggressive participant, shed light on the quantitative findings. When describing a conflict he had with his partner over an April Fool's joke in which she told him that she had been unfaithful with her homosexual male friend, he states: "I knew [her friend] is gay and would never do anything [or] try to have his way with my girlfriend…I became so enraged that I actually threw a hammer at the wall. After seeing how angry I was she…told me 'April Fool's.' [Expletive] that is a horrible thing to do." Although he recognizes that this was a joke, he rated this conflict as severe, a 4 on a 5-point scale. It cannot be deduced why aggressive participants perceived conflicts with their partners to

be more severe than the other participants. Empirical evidence demonstrates, however, that aggressive behavior leads to conflict escalation (Atkin, et al. 2002; Infante et al., 1990). This is facilitated by aggressive behavior's reciprocal effect, whereby the aggressive behavior of one partner reliably elicits aggressive responses in the other (Katz, Jones, & Beach, 2000). For example, when describing a later argument, participant 141 states: "…she complained that I was too fat and that I need to stop eating every snack I see. I told her I thought her friends were whores and that they needed to stop trying to get an STD…She told me I drink too much..." This participant rated the severity of this conflict a 4 as well. The results of H3 and H4 reveal the key difference between rejection sensitivity and trait aggressiveness. Unlike the rejection sensitive, aggressive partners' perceptions of conflict severity are exaggerated or are more severe due to the consequence of their own provocative behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

The chief limitations of this study are consequences of the sample and the design used. The sample size was relatively small to begin with, and greatly diminished with each subsequent conflict report (report 1: $n = 100$, report 2: $n = 87$, report 3: $n = 42$, report 4: $n = 18$). Low statistical power may account for the lack of significant findings. In addition to a higher number of participants, future conflict diary studies should extend across a longer period of time to ensure more observations per individual so that the effect of rejection sensitivity on conflict behaviors can be detected.

While the sample was balanced in terms of gender, participants of this study do not represent a random sample. The majority of participants were Caucasian, in same-race dating relationships, and between the ages of 18 and 22. The findings from this data set may not be generalizable to rejection sensitive partners in marital relationships or to different age groups.

Future research should make efforts to explore conflict styles and behaviors in romantic relationships using samples that can address non-White same-race and interracial couples. Rejection sensitivity might play an integral role in interracial communication, especially when racial stereotypes of a threatening nature are invoked. Lenard and Locke (1993) found that African-Americans and Caucasians are likely to perceive each other in a threatening way, leading to a cycle of emotional reactions that may confirm dysfunctional stereotypes and prevent successful interracial communication.

Another limitation is that this sample was self-selected. Since participation in this study required relatively more commitment and dedication on the part of the respondents, members of the sample may possess characteristics, such as contentiousness and self-discipline, which promote compliance but could confound the variables under study. There is preliminary evidence that self-control competencies attenuate the influence of rejection sensitivity on interpersonal behavior (Levy, Ayduk, & Downey, 2001).

Despite the appropriateness of using the diary method, it is not without limitations. Most importantly, the reliability and validity of the data collected depended on a level of participant commitment that is not typically required of other types of research studies (Bolger et al., 2003). Failure to remember to respond or failure to have the diary on hand is compounded by the risk of retrospection error and reactance. However, Bolger et al. (2003) cite that there is little evidence that reactance reduces diary data's validity. Furthermore, habituation is likely to occur as the result of repeated diary entries, which may attenuate reactance and reduce forgetfulness.

This study depended on the accuracy of participants' conflict reports, which could have been confounded by participants' conceptualizations of relationship conflicts. Although participants were given an explicit definition of conflict in line with Deutsch's (1973) definition,

participants might have only reported conflicts that were consistent with their personal definition of conflict. This means that conflicts handled using predominantly avoiding, obliging, or collaborative behaviors may not have been reported by participants who define conflict as a confrontational or antagonistic event. This could explain the lack of significant findings for conflict behaviors that were not dominating in nature.

Retrospection error is another risk to the accuracy of the conflict reports. Participants' limited ability to recall may have resulted in an aggregate report of their conflict behaviors during the episode that reflected a lay construction of conflict. Participants may not have reported the full variety of conflict behaviors they used during each episode, basing their reports within pre-existing parameters that define lay conceptualizations of conflict and conflict behavior. This is not an unusual phenomenon when diary methods are used (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). Retrospection is susceptible to state-congruent recall, which could have affected the reports of perceived conflict severity. The state participants were in while reporting this information, which could have varied depending on the amount of time elapsed between the conflict and the conflict report, could have lead to biased responses

Despite these limitations, the findings provide valuable clarity in understanding conflict behavior. Rejection-sensitive people behaved as if every conflict was severe, even though they do not appraise them as such. Aggressive people behaved as if conflicts are severe because they tended to perceive them in that way. The conflict styles that were confirmed, avoiding and dominating, appear to emerge out of a general attitude towards conflict. Chapter 6 offers a summary and conclusion of this work, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the project.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis sought to address the irony that people behave in ways that jeopardize the relationships they value most. The relationships between rejection sensitivity, aggressiveness, conflict behavior, conflict severity perceptions, and conflict style were ascertained by conducting a month-long diary study of partners in romantic relationships. After each conflict with their partners, participants reported their conflict behavior and the degree to which they perceived the conflict as severe. Hierarchical multivariate linear modeling was used to analyze the data. Using this form of statistical analyses, participant's behaviors from each conflict report were treated as a function of his or her personal characteristics.

People have a fundamental desire to feel accepted by valued others. This yearning drives them to form intimate relationships and motivates them to behave in ways that maintain them. On a basic level, efforts to maintain intimate bonds are made to ensure that one's acceptance is not endangered and the need for belonging is met. Perhaps an even more potent motivator than the need for acceptance is the desire to avoid rejection, which is so strong that it drives people to behave in ways that are not always in their best interest. No matter how much they value their intimate relationships, partners are not impervious to feeling rejected. Rejection is not the opposite of acceptance, but is the perception that one's partner does not value the relationship as much one wishes. In effect, the chances of feeling rejected increase with relational value; as relational value increases, do does it's potential to fall. This is coupled with the fact one's desire for their partner to value their relationship with them is also likely to increase. Moreover, conflicts occur with regularity in close relationships. As interdependence within a relationship increases, so does the likelihood for partners' goals to conflict and for one or both partners to

experience rejection. Paradoxically, the manner in which partners manage rejection in their important relationships is often maladaptive. This is important to relational quality, as research has shown that how conflicts are handled effect relationship satisfaction. Taken together, this implies that people feel more hurt and anger when they feel rejected by valued others, which inhibits a pro-social response under circumstances in which relational maintenance is probably needed. When one is sensitive to rejection, this phenomenon is amplified.

Conflicts are a rich medium in which to study this phenomenon for a variety of reasons. As relational events that occur with frequency, they uniquely impact relationship quality. In this way, conflicts can reveal personality dispositions that incline the individual to behave in a maladaptive way. Further, the individual differences in conflict behavior that result from rejection sensitivity are more pronounced when relationship security is challenged and there is the potential for rejection. Behavior in any context is dependent upon situational circumstances, personal attributes, and the interaction between the two. Since a variety of factors can affect the way partners behave during conflict, the existence of a persistent pattern conflict behavior was questioned in an effort to critically examine the popularly held notion of conflict style. According to this data set, merely two conflict styles exist: dominating and avoiding. The confirmation of only these two styles lends credence to the idea that attitudes about conflict are based on a general fight or flight response to conflict.

Rejection sensitive people expect to be rejected by significant others, and are at risk for interpersonal distress as a result of the hostile and aggressive behavior they exhibit in relationships. The anxious expectancies of rejection link situational features to psychological processes that operate in interpersonal relationships. Because rejection-sensitive individuals overreact to rejection, it was hypothesized that rejection sensitivity would be positively related to

perceptions of conflict severity. However, this was not the case. Rejection-sensitive people were not more likely to perceive their conflicts with their partners to be serious than other participants. Nonetheless, they used maladaptive, aggressive conflict behavior regardless of how they perceived the conflict. This explains rejection sensitivity's role in conflict and in romantic relationships. In conflict, rejection sensitivity leads the individual to experience a heightened state of negative arousal, which determines their conflict behavior regardless of intentions to behave otherwise.

Trait aggressiveness was proved to be distinct from rejection sensitivity, which is coherent with both conceptual and empirical evidence that rejection sensitivity is not a global disposition. Like rejection sensitivity, aggressiveness was related to dominating conflict behavior. In spite of this, the two did not interact to support the predictions that they would jointly produce dominating conflict behavior and perceptions of conflict severity. Instead, aggressiveness was positively correlated with conflict severity perceptions independently from rejection sensitivity. The findings of this thesis demonstrated that personal characteristics, such rejection sensitivity, have the power to determine conflict behavior more so than the perception of conflict severity. However, it was demonstrated that personal variables, such as aggressiveness, also sway conflict severity perceptions.

Rejection-sensitive people realize the importance of maintaining social bonds, but once the disposition is activated during conflict they employ hostile conflict behavior despite its inappropriateness and ineffectiveness. It is important for those who are rejection-sensitive to recognize why their social failure has taken place so that appropriate actions can be undertaken in the future to promote the attainment of their goal to feel accepted. By understanding how the solicitation of negative affect from their partners has implications on their own well-being,

rejection-sensitive individuals might be more aware of how their expectations of rejection indirectly endanger their social bonds. This requires increased efforts at self-regulation so that the anticipation of rejection can facilitate the selection of a message that does not produced undesired emotions.

Footnotes

[1] ANOVA analyses revealed neither the length of time partners had been together nor did their relationship statuse influence how serious participants perceived conflicts to be or their conflict behavior. This is contrary to evidence that conflict management adjusts throughout the life of romantic relationships (Cloven & Roloff, 1994). Also, gender did not play a role in perceptions of conflict severity or conflict behavior.

[2] Zero order correlations indicated that assertiveness ($r = .32$, $p < .01$) and avoiding behavior in the second conflict ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$) were the only variables correlated with reported relationship length, indicating that relationship duration did not greatly influence conflict behavior.

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Appendix A

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire

Each of the items below describes things college students sometimes ask of their significant others or a person they are romantically interested in. Please do your best to imagine that you are in each situation.

1. At a party, you notice someone attractive on the other side of the room that you'd like to get to know, and you approach him/her to try and start a conversation.

How CONCERNED would you be over whether or not the person would want to talk to you.?

very unconcerned				very concerned
1	2	3	4	5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to talk with me.

very unlikely				very likely
1	2	3	4	5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to talk with you?

not angry				very angry
1	2	3	4	5

2. You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not the person would want to go out with you?

very unconcerned				very concerned
1	2	3	4	5

I would EXPECT that the person would want to go out on a date with me.

very unlikely				very likely
1	2	3	4	5

How ANGRY would you be if that person turned you down?

not angry				very angry
1	2	3	4	5

3. Your significant other has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would decide to stay in?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would willingly choose to stay in with me.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he went out with her/his friends anyway?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

4. You ask your significant other for extra money because you are having financial difficulties.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not he or she would help you out?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that my significant other would not mind helping me out as much as s/he can.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he would not give you the money?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

5. You approach your significant other to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to talk with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to talk with me to try to work things out.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to try and work things out?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

6. You ask your significant other to go on vacation with you over Spring Break.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to go with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to go with me.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to go with you?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

7. You call or approach your significant other after a bitter argument because you want to make up.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to make up with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would be at least as eager to make up as I would be.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to make up with you?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

8. You ask your significant other if you can borrow something of his/hers.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not s/he would want to loan it to you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would willingly loan me it.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to loan it to you?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

9. You ask your significant other to come to an occasion important to you.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to come?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to come.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to go?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

10. You ask your significant other to do you a big favor.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would want to help you out?

very concerned very unconcerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would willingly agree to help me out.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to help you out?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

11. You ask your significant other if s/he really loves you.

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not your significant other would say yes?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would answer yes sincerely.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not say s/he loves you?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

12. You ask your significant other to meet your parents.

How CONCERNED would you be about whether or not your significant other would want to meet your parents?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to meet my parents.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to meet your parents?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

13. You ask your significant other to spend more time with you.

How CONCERNED would you be about whether or not your significant other would want to spend more time with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to spend more time with me.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to spend more time with you?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

14. You ask your significant other to pick up your friend from the airport.

How CONCERNED would you be about whether or not your significant other would want pick up your friend from the airport?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to pick up my friend from the airport.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not want to pick your friend up from the airport?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

15. Lately you've been noticing some distance between yourself and your significant other, and you ask him/her if there is something wrong.

How CONCERNED would you be over whether or not s/he still loves you and wants to be with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT s/he would show sincere love and commitment no matter what else was may be going on.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he did not show sincere love and commitment?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

16. You bring up the issue of sexual protection with your significant other and tell him/her how important you think it is.

I could not see this happening. Agree Disagree

How CONCERNED would you be over her/his reaction?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT s/he would be willing to discuss our possible options without getting defensive.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be is s/he reacted negatively?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

17. You ask your significant other to move in with you.

I could not see this happening. Agree Disagree

How CONCERNED or anxious would you be over whether or not s/he also would want to move in with you?

very unconcerned very concerned

1 2 3 4 5

I would EXPECT that s/he would want to move in with me.

very unlikely very likely

1 2 3 4 5

How ANGRY would you be if s/he said no?

not angry very angry

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Spouse Specific Assertion Aggression Scale

Please answer the following questions about how you GENERALLY deal with your significant other in your current romantic relationship. Rate how much you agree or disagree statement as being characteristic of you.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

1. Confronting my significant other with problems as they come up is seldom a problem for me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

2. I often yell back when my significant other yells at me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

3. When my significant other tries to boss me around, I frequently do the opposite of what s/he asks.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

4. Telling my significant other that s/he takes advantage of me is not difficult for me to do.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

5. I am able to tell my significant other that I don't want to engage in sexual intercourse when s/he desires to.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

6. If my significant other is annoying me, I do not find it difficult to express my annoyance to him/her.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

7. I often take my time “just to show” my significant other when s/he tries to boss me around.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

8. Saying “NO” to my significant other when I would like to say “NO” is easy for me to do.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

9. I frequently find that I am able to ask my significant other to do me favors without any difficulty.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

10. I do not have difficulty telling my significant other my true feelings.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

11. Challenging my significant other’s beliefs is something I can do with little difficulty.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

12. In general, I am very direct in expressing my anger to my significant other.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

13. In general, asserting myself with my significant other is something I often do, even though I don’t think s/he would say or do anything negative to me.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

14. I do not have trouble saying something that might hurt my significant other's feelings when I feel s/he has injured me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

15. I often make threats to my significant other that I really don't intend to carry out.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

16. Expressing criticism to my significant other is not a problem for me.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

17. I can express a differing point-of-view to my significant other without much difficulty.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

18. When I'm feeling insecure and jealous, I'll often pick a fight with my significant other rather than tell him/her directly what's on my mind.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

19. Starting arguments with my significant other when s/he disagrees with me is something I often do.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

20. Asking my significant other to do one of my chores, even when I don't feel well, is easy for me to do.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

21. I often say nasty things to my significant other, especially when I'm angrily discussing something with him/her.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

22. Slamming doors is something I often do when I get mad at my significant other.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

23. I'll often do something on purpose to annoy my significant other, and then apologize excessively when s/he accuses me of it.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

24. I often let my significant other know when I disapprove of his/her behavior.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

25. I will often break a "rule" my significant other has made just to spite him/her.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

26. When my significant other makes me do something that I don't like, I often make a point of getting even later.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

27. In general, I am not afraid to assert myself with my significant other.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

28. I often won't do what my significant other asks me to do if s/he asks in a nasty way.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

29. I do not give my significant other the “silent treatment” when I’m mad at him/her. Instead, I just tell him/her what has angered me.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

Appendix C

Initial Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory- II

Please answer the following questions about what you GENERALLY do when you and your partner are in an argument, disagreement, or conflict. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

1. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

2. I try to keep my conflict with my partner to myself.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

3. I try to "split the difference" in order to resolve an issue.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

4. I try to satisfy my partner's needs.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

5. I try to investigate the issue to find a solution acceptable to us.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

6. I avoid openly discussing our differences with my partner.

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

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

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

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

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

9. I accommodate my partner's wishes.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

10. I try to integrate my ideas with my partner's to come up with a joint decision.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

11. I try to stay away from disagreement with my partner.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

12. I use my expertise to make a decision that favors me.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

13. I propose a middle ground for breaking a deadlock.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

14. I give into my partner's wishes.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

15. I try to work with my partner to find solutions that satisfy both of our expectations.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

16. I try to keep my disagreement with my partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

17. I pursue my side of the issue.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

18. I negotiate with my partner to reach a compromise.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

19. I go along with my partner's suggestions.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

20. I exchange accurate information with my partner so that we can solve the problem together.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

21. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my partner.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

22. I use my power over my partner to win.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

23. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made with my partner.

strongly disagree strongly agree
1 2 3 4 5

Appendix D

Conflict Severity Scale

Please answer the following questions concerning the conflict you just had with your partner. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

24. My image was threatened in this situation……...….1 2 3 4 5
25. My self-esteem was threatened in this situation……1 2 3 4 5
26. This situation was very serious to me……1 2 3 4 5
27. This situation made me concerned that my
    partner saw me in a negative light…….1 2 3 4 5
28. This situation was a major problem……1 2 3 4 5
29. This situation was no big deal…….1 2 3 4 5
30. I felt like a lesser person because of this situation……..1 2 3 4 5
31. This situation was very challenging to deal with……1 2 3 4 5
32. I will easily get over this situation……..1 2 3 4 5
33. I am a different person than before this situation happened……...1 2 3 4 5
34. I would characterize this situation as severe……...1 2 3 4 5
35. This situation challenged how I think about myself……...……1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E

Diary Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory- II

Please answer the following questions concerning the conflict you just had with your partner. Rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

36. I used my influence to get my ideas accepted……1 2 3 4 5
37. I tried to keep my conflict with my partner to myself……1 2 3 4 5
38. I tried to "split the difference" in order to resolve the issue……...1 2 3 4 5
39. I tried to satisfy my partner's needs……...1 2 3 4 5
40. I tried to investigate the issue to find a solution acceptable to us…..1 2 3 4 5
41. I avoided openly discussing our differences with my partner…..…...1 2 3 4 5
42. I used my authority to make a decision in my favor…….. 1 2 3 4 5
43. I tried to find a middle course to resolve an impasse……..1 2 3 4 5
44. I accommodated my partner's wishes…….1 2 3 4 5
45. I tried to integrate my ideas with my partner's to come up with a joint decision……..……1 2 3 4 5
46. I tried to stay away from disagreement with my partner……..… 1 2 3 4 5
47. I used my expertise to make a decision that favored me…….…. 1 2 3 4 5
48. I proposed a middle ground for breaking a deadlock…….…….. 1 2 3 4 5
49. I gave into my partner's wishes……1 2 3 4 5
50. I tried to work with my partner to find solutions that satisfied both of our expectations……..…1 2 3 4 5
51. I tried to keep my disagreement with my partner to myself in order to avoid hard feelings……..1 2 3 4 5
52. I pursued my side of the issue……...1 2 3 4 5
53. I negotiated with my partner to reach a compromise……1 2 3 4 5
54. I went along with my partner's suggestions……..1 2 3 4 5

55. I exchanged accurate information with my partner so
that we could solve the problem together……..1 2 3 4 5
56. I tried to avoid an unpleasant exchange with my partner……. 1 2 3 4 5
57. I used my power over my partner to win……...1 2 3 4 5
58. I used “give and take” so that a compromise could be
made with my partner. …….1 2 3 4 5