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Relationships Among Marital Satisfaction, Marital Conflict Dimensions, and Marital Conflict Strategies

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RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MARITAL SATISFACTION, MARITAL CONFLICT DIMENSIONS, AND MARITAL CONFLICT STRATEGIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Marital distress has been shown to negatively affect child outcomes. John Gottman has claimed that he has developed a concept that can buffer children from the negative effects of marital distress. The concept is emotion coaching (EC), which teaches children about emotions, emotion regulation, and effective problem-solving. Children who are emotion coached have better outcomes regardless of level of marital distress. Gottman also claims that emotion coaching parents report higher marital satisfaction and tend to score higher in positive conflict resolution styles and lower in negative conflict resolution styles. This study set out to test Gottman's concepts of EC and emotion dismissing (ED) and their relationships with marital satisfaction and marital conflict. In addition, this study explored the relationships between marital conflict and marital satisfaction. Lastly, this study set out to use a self-report instrument to measure EC and ED, the Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire (MESQ: Legace-Seguin, 2001).

Unfortunately, the MESQ in this study did not have adequate reliability to answer the questions of how EC and ED were related to marital satisfaction and marital conflict. However, results were reported for relationships between marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and demographic variables.

Results suggest that when one uses one negative way of resolving conflict, one is likely to use other negative strategies. Also, when one uses the positive way of resolving conflict, negative strategies are less likely to be used. Results showed that frequency/severity of conflicts were related to the perceived seriousness of arguments and reports of conflicts being resolved. Also, number of times conflicts were resolved was related to decreased perceived seriousness of argument topics. Marital satisfaction was related to higher scores on positive conflict strategies and conflict efficacy and lower scores of frequency/severity of conflicts and negative conflict strategies. Discussion includes implications for further research and family therapy.

(143 pages)

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Jennifer L. Hogge

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INTRODUCTION

Marital distress is harmful to children (Gottman, 1998). "In children, marital distress, conflict, and disruption are associated with depression, withdrawal, poor social competence, health problems, poor academic performance, and a variety of conduct-related difficulties" (p. 169). Whenever possible, marital distress should be reduced. However, this is not always possible. Therefore, there is a need to find ways to buffer children against the negative consequences of parents' distressed marriages. It has been shown that reducing marital conflict will help reduce negative child outcomes (e.g., Dadds, Atkinson, Turner, Blums, & Lendich, 1999; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997). It also has been shown that marital conflict affects parenting style, which influences child outcomes (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000). What is not clearly understood is which factors aid in parents' using positive parenting skills, thereby possibly buffering their children from the negative consequences of their parents' distressed marriages. Gottman et al. suggested that parenting children about emotions might be a factor that buffers them against the negative effects of marital conflict. If emotion has a mediating effect, child problems could be addressed by the parents' regulation of their own emotions and effective problem-solving which could then aid their ability to teach their children about emotional regulation and effective problem-solving. In addition, if parents are aware of their emotions, are able to regulate their emotions, and have effective problem-solving skills, they then would be modeling this for their children.

Marital Conflict and Parenting

Family scientists have explored a connection between marriage and parent-child relationships. Aspects of the marital relationship and the parent-child relationship studied have included parenting, marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and child outcomes. In a meta-analysis of research conducted on interparental conflict and parenting behaviors from 1981 through 1998, Krishnakumar and Buehler (2000) found that the body of research at that time provided evidence of a relationship between negative marital interactions and negative parent-child interactions. This meta-analysis found that when preoccupied with marital conflict, parents exhibited more harsh discipline and less emotional affection and support. This relationship has been described as the spillover hypothesis, which suggests that emotions, affect, and moods created in the marital dyad spillover into the child-parent dyad (Krishnakumar & Buehler). Positive affect and mood that are created in healthy marital relationships transfer to the parent-child dyad and allow for more favorable parenting practices. However, in marital relationships with high conflict, negative affect and mood are transferred to the parent-child dyad through less favorable parenting practices. This relationship between marital conflict and parenting has been well established in the literature (e.g., Katz & Woodin, 2002; Kitzmann, 2000; Krishnakumar & Buehler; Lindahl & Malik, 1999a, 1999b).

Marital Satisfaction and Parenting

Little research has been conducted on the relationship between marital satisfaction and parenting. This researcher has found one article to date with good research design

and measurements exploring these two variables. Lindahl, Clements, and Markman (1997) showed in their longitudinal study of 25 families that current stresses and the quality of marriage had a greater impact on parenting behaviors than pre-child marital stresses or quality. Also, when couples had negative marital interactions, husbands had more trouble regulating their emotions and often involved their children in the marital conflict. Obviously, more research is needed that explores the connection between marital satisfaction and parenting. In addition, few articles have explored the relationships among parenting, marital satisfaction, and marital conflict within the same study.

Parenting

Literature exploring parenting has focused on the parents' affect toward their children and discipline strategies (Gottman et al., 1997). The variables considered throughout the literature on parenting have consistently focused on permissive versus restrictive practices and warmth versus hostility (Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Baumrind's (1967) parenting styles, widely used in research, are based in these variables of permissive/restrictive and warmth/hostility. Attachment theory researchers have added to the parenting literature by discussing affect between parents and children (e.g., attachment styles: secure, anxious, ambivalent; Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1971). Other parenting aspects related to the permissive dimension include democracy versus autocracy and emotional involvement versus detached (Maccoby & Martin). In general, the majority of literature on parenting has focused on parents' affect toward children and

disciplining behavior. What appears to be missing is how parents teach their children about emotions, emotional regulation, and effective problem-solving, which may buffer children against the negative effects of marital conflict.

Meta Emotion Parenting

Meta emotion (ME) is a new parenting concept that has emerged in recent years that needs further exploration. Gottman et al. (1997) expanded the concept of parenting through ME by researching how parents interact with their children regarding their emotions. ME is defined as one's thoughts and feelings towards one's own feelings and the feelings of others (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997). Gottman developed four emotional parenting styles based on ME: emotion coaching (EC), emotion dismissing (ED), disapproving, and laissez faire. Parents who use EC accept and value emotions, help children identify their emotions and express them appropriately, and help children problem solve. Dismissing parents are uncomfortable with negative emotions, disengage from their child's emotions, minimize their child's emotions, and do not teach problem-solving skills. Disapproving parents are similar to dismissing parents but punish their children for expressing negative emotions, believe that negative emotions should be controlled, and are concerned about their children's obedience, not their emotions. Laissez faire parents believe that all emotions are acceptable and should be expressed, but give little guidance on appropriate expression or problem-solving. It is thought that children who are parented with EC will develop emotional intelligence (EI; Gottman et al., 1997). EI has been described as knowing one's own emotions, managing emotions

appropriately, emotional self control (regulating emotions in order to accomplish goals/impulse control), being able to detect emotions in others, and positive interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1995).

Marital Conflict, Marital Satisfaction, and ME Parenting

In a longitudinal study of 56 couples, Gottman et al. (1997) explored marital conflict resolution styles, marital satisfaction, and ME parenting styles. Results indicated that EC could buffer children against the negative effects of marital conflict. That is, children with EC parents did better academically and behaviorally and had fewer health problems (Gottman et al.). In addition to exploring the effect of ME styles on child outcomes, Gottman et al. also explored connections between ME, marital satisfaction, and conflict resolution. Results suggest that there is a correlation among these variables.

> The ME variables are related to the couple's entire philosophy of emotional communication. Couples who have an EC ME structure are also more validating and affectionate during marital conflict, they are less disgusted, belligerent, and contemptuous during marital conflict, and husbands are less likely to stonewall. They express a philosophy of marriage that emphasizes companionship, we-ness, and they express fondness and admiration for one another. (p. 210)

Therefore, Gottman et al. (1997) claimed that ME is related to child outcomes, marital conflict resolution styles, and marital satisfaction. Specifically, they suggested that EC parents (aware of their own and their children's emotions) tend to use positive ways of resolving marital conflict, have higher marital satisfaction, and their children have fewer behavior problems, good social adjustment, and fewer health problems.

Purpose

Although the research on ME is new and exciting, most has been conducted by Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (Gottman & DeClaire, 1997; Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1996; Gottman et al., 1997; Katz & Gottman, 1986; Katz, Gottman, & Hooven, 1996). Even though these researchers are reputable, other social scientists need to explore these variables in order to support or refute their findings. In addition, Gottman et al.'s study consisted of interviews and observational data. All variables were measured by coding observations of various tasks, which is very costly.

The current study aimed to replicate the Gottman and colleagues' (1997) findings and, in addition, use paper and pencil measures rather than coding observational data. Replication of Gottman and colleagues' findings is necessary in order to provide additional analysis of ME parenting styles and to either support or refute Gottman and colleagues' findings. This study addressed the relationship between marital distress and parenting styles to determine whether some parents in distressed marriages are nonetheless able to assist their children in emotional regulation, thereby perhaps buffering them from the effects of the distressed marriages. This research explored how parents who use EC or dismissing parenting styles differ in two aspects of marital distress: marital satisfaction and marital conflict. That is, do levels of marital satisfaction and marital conflict affect the parents' ability to use EC parenting with their children? Finally, this research aimed to explore whether couples with high marital satisfaction and/or positive conflict resolution styles are more likely to use EC parenting with their children.

Relevance to Family Therapy

Current research and research in general that explores a link between the marital relationship and parent-child relationship is extremely relevant for family therapy. A recent review of the literature on treating children and adolescents with behavioral and emotional problems found that family-based interventions were comparable to individually-based interventions and, in some cases, more effective (Northey, Wells, Silverman, & Bailey, 2003). In addition, children and adolescents often present with a diagnosable disorder; however, upon further assessment, therapists often find contextual factors affecting the child's functioning, such as school, peers, family functioning, parenting, and so forth (Northey et al.).

Family therapy is based on a systemic perspective, which views the family as a system of interconnected parts. Parts in a system are recursive in their interactions; that is, each part is influential on all other parts of the system, as well as influenced by those other parts. Therefore, system theorists believe that a change in one part of the system will reverberate to the other parts of the system (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). If there is a connection between ME parenting, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction, family therapy may be more effective by incorporating ME into treatment. By incorporating the teaching and coaching of ME parenting and ME, couples with distressed marriages could learn how to buffer their children from the negative effects of their conflict by interacting with their children differently.

In addition, if there is a relationship between ME parenting and child outcome, therapists could intervene with a child's negative behavior by exploring how his or her

parents interact with the child regarding his or her emotions and problem-solving. Therefore, if there is a relationship between ME parenting, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction, therapists need to assess these when working with children as the identified client. Assessing the parents' marital satisfaction and conflict, and addressing these issues may then assist the parents in being effective EC parents, thus reducing the negative child outcomes associated with marital conflict and improving the parent-child relationship. In addition, if there is a relationship between ME parenting and positive child outcomes, it may be that even parents with high marital conflict who are not willing to address the conflict in treatment but are willing to learn to parent with ME (regulation of their own emotions, being in tune with their child's emotions, and teaching the child positive problem-solving skills) will be able to buffer their children from the negative effects of marital conflict.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social scientists have long been interested in marriage and the factors that make a marriage strong and satisfying. In a review of research on marriage, Gottman (1998) found seven patterns in unhappy marriages:

> (a) greater negative affect reciprocity in unhappy couples; (b) lower ratios of positivity to negativity in unhappy couples and couples headed for divorce; (c) less positive sentiment override in unhappy couples; (d) the presence of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling in couples headed for divorce; (e) greater evidence of the wife demand-husband withdraw pattern in unhappy couples; (f) negative and lasting attributions about the partner and more negative narratives about the marriage and partner in unhappy couples; and (g) greater physiological arousal in unhappy couples. (p. 190)

Although studying the effects of these seven patterns on marriage and on parents' ability to use ME parenting styles would be interesting, it is too large for this project. Therefore, the current research addressed the concepts in (d) and (e) above (conflict resolution and marital satisfaction [global]) and the relationships among these variables and ME parenting styles. The research studies included in this review were chosen because they included one or more variables included in this study. Studies were found through electronic databases for scientific journals (such as PsycINFO, Academic Search Premier, and Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection) and through reference lists in studies included.

The review of literature will first provide a sample of research that has been conducted on marriage and parenting. This will identify which concepts have been thoroughly studied and which need further exploration. Second, the review will explain the origin of ME and why it needs further exploration. The topics covered will include

marital conflict and satisfaction; how marital conflict and marital satisfaction can influence the parent-child subsystem; how marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and parenting affects child behavior; and ME.

Conflict Resolution Styles and Marital Satisfaction

In a 5-year study of 83 couples looking at relationship personality, conflict resolution style, and marital satisfaction, conflict resolution styles were shown to be related to marital satisfaction (Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). Relationship personality was defined as relationship competence (belief of how well one can cope with conflict), empathy (ability to place oneself in another's position to understand his or her feelings), and vulnerability (inability to forgive another who has hurt one). Relationship personality was measured by a 32-item questionnaire developed by the authors consisting of the three scales: relationship competence, empathy, and vulnerability. Conflict resolution style was measured by a questionnaire created by the authors consisting of two scales: positive conflict resolution and dysfunctional conflict resolution. Relationship satisfaction was measured using the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). Although the authors developed most of the measures they used, they reported respectable psychometrics. See Appendix C, Table 15 for psychometric properties of all instruments in literature review.

The authors used path analysis to examine both direct and indirect influences on marital satisfaction. Results suggest both direct and indirect paths from relationship personality to marital satisfaction (Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). Couples with positive

relationship personality had higher marital satisfaction than those with negative relationship personality. However, including conflict resolution style in the analysis reduced the effect of relationship personality on marital satisfaction; that is, conflict resolution style was a mediating factor. The chi-square for time 1 (the direct influence of relationship personality) is 8.33 ($p < .005$); however, the chi-square values after that were not statistically significant for relationship personality, suggesting that conflict resolution style had more impact than relationship personality after the first year of marriage. Therefore, the longer a couple stayed married (up to five years), the stronger the relationship between their conflict resolution style and marital satisfaction.

It appears that how a couple fights is more important than the frequency of conflict (Cramer, 2000). Relationship satisfaction was negatively and statistically significantly related to all three variables: conflict ($r = -.35$, $p < .001$), negative conflict style ($r = -.53$, $p < .001$), and unresolved conflict ($r = -.51$, $p < .001$). However, negative conflict style had the greatest influence on lower scores of relationship satisfaction ($r = -.43$, $p < .001$), as shown when conflict and unresolved conflict were controlled. Cramer used a self-designed scale to measure conflict in terms of the three subscales (conflict, negative conflict style, and unresolved conflict). To measure relationship satisfaction, Cramer used the RAS. Participants of Cramer's study consisted of 199 undergraduate students. Cramer did not look at specific conflict resolution to examine their effects on marital satisfaction.

Gottman and Driver (2005) explored the relationship between marital conflict and everyday marital interaction in 130 newlywed couples. The couples were videotaped

while discussing an ongoing disagreement in their relationship. This was coded using the Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF; Gottman, Coan, & McCoy, 1996). The authors created two negative affect codes: withdrawal (fear, stonewalling, sadness, whining, and domineering) and attack-defend (anger, criticism, belligerence, contempt, and defensiveness). In addition to this videotaped discussion, couples spent 24 hours in an apartment set up with cameras to record their daily activities and interactions. Dinner time was recorded and the recordings were used for the data. They were coded by using the SPAFF and the Turning Towards versus Turning Away (Turning System; Driver & Gottman, 2004). Turning away was defined as using negative affect to respond to partner while turning toward was responding with positive affect. Results indicated that a husband's turning away was related to his wife's withdrawal. That is, during the apartment interaction, a husband's response of negative affect was related to his wife's withdrawal when discussing a topic of conflict. This pattern was related to husbands' withdrawing during conflict, x^2 (19) = 19.33, p = .399, BBN = .528.

Cramer (2003) explored marital satisfaction and its relationship with facilitativeness, negative conflict, demand for approval, and self-esteem. Facilitativeness was measured by the Relationship Inventory (Barrett-Lennard, 1964), which measures level of regard (how valued one feels by spouse), empathy (how understood one feels by spouse), congruence (how genuine one feels his/her spouse is with who they are), and unconditionality of regard (conditional or unconditional). Negative conflict was measured by the Differences of Opinion Scale (Cramer, 2002), which looks at frequency of difference of opinions, avoidance, resolution, outcome evaluation, and resentment.

Demand for approval was measured by the Demand for Approval Scale of the Irrational Beliefs Test (Jones, 1969). Self-esteem was measured by the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965).

Results indicate that level of regard and empathy were related to marital satisfaction. That is, level of regard $\beta = .48$, $t(142) = 4.62$, $p < .001$ and empathy $\beta = .42$, $t(142) = 3.47$, $p < .001$ had a direct effect on marital satisfaction. However, results indicated that although negative conflict $\beta = -.58$, $t(142) = 5.73$, $p < .001$ had an indirect effect on marital satisfaction and was mediated by level of regard and empathy, the direct effect was not significant. Cramer (2003) therefore concluded from these results that "how satisfied one is with one's romantic relationship may depend more on how accepted and understood by one's partner one feels than on how frequently one engages in negative conflict with one's partner" (p. 96).

Marchand (2004) looked at marital satisfaction and its relationship with the conflict resolution styles of attacking and compromising, as well as attachment (comfort with closeness, comfort with depending on each other, anxiety over abandonment and rejection), anxiety over abandonment and rejection, and depression. The sample consisted of 64 married couples. Marital satisfaction was measured by the Marital Comparison Level Inventory (MCI; Sabatelli, 1984). Conflict resolution was measured by the Conflict Resolution Behavior Questionnaire (CRBQ; Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993), which had two subscales: attacking and compromising. Attachment was measured by the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS; Collins & Read, 1990), which had subscales of closeness,

dependency, and anxiety. Depressive symptoms were measured by the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977).

Results indicated that for husbands and wives, marital satisfaction was low when attacking scores were high (r = -.32, p < .01 for husbands; r = -.38, p < .01 for wives) and compromising scores were low (r = .46, p < .01 for husbands; r = .37, p < .01). In addition, marital satisfaction was related to attachment and depression. That is, for husbands, low sores on comfort with closeness (r = .26, p < .05) and comfort depending on others (r = .42, p < .01), and high scores on anxiety over abandonment and rejection (r = -.39, p < .01) and depression (r = -.35, p < .01) related to low scores on marital satisfaction. For wives, low scores of marital satisfaction were related to high scores of anxiety with abandonment and rejection (r = -.39, p < .01). Therefore, marital satisfaction and conflict resolution styles are related. However, so are marital satisfaction and attachment concepts and depressive symptoms.

Kurdek (1995) explored three different conflict resolution styles (conflict-engagement, withdrawal, and compliance) and marital satisfaction with 155 married couples. The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm et al., 1986) was used to measure marital satisfaction and the Conflict Resolutions Styles Inventory (CRSI; Kurdek, 1994) was used to measure conflict resolution styles.

Results suggest that conflict resolution styles did influence marital satisfaction (r's ranging from .19 to .40, p's ranging from .05 to .01; Kurdek, 1995). Specifically, when the wife used conflict engagement and the husband used withdrawal (wife demand-husband withdrawal), the couple tended to score lower on marital satisfaction. In

addition, withdrawing husbands reported lower marital satisfaction when their wives infrequently used either compliance or withdrawal, while wives' use of withdrawal had a negative impact on their own marital satisfaction regardless of the conflict styles their husbands used. Therefore, Kurdek concluded that husbands' marital satisfaction is more correlated with their wives' conflict styles than wives' marital satisfaction is correlated with their husbands' conflict styles.

Often, studies discuss withdrawal as a conflict resolution style that has a negative impact on the marital relationship. However, there are many definitions of this concept. One researcher looked at three types of withdrawal: "intimacy avoidance (IA; withdrawal from caregiving), conflict avoidance (CA; withdrawal from conflict without rejection of partner), and angry avoidance (AA; withdrawal from negative affect and rejects or communicates anger towards partner)" (Roberts, 2000, pp. 696-697). Roberts explored the effect of withdrawal on marital satisfaction, specifically how withdrawal and hostility affected marital satisfaction in 97 married couples. Marital withdrawal was measured by the Interaction Response Patterns Questionnaire (IRPQ, Roberts), which was designed by the author and consists of four scales: IA, CA, Angry Withdrawal (AW), and Hostile Reciprocity (HR). Marital distress was measured by the Marital Adjustment Test (MAT; Locke & Wallace, 1959). "IRPQ ratings of HR and AW were significantly related to the observed frequency of the partner's hostile behavior" (Roberts, p. 699). Not tracking was related to AW for wives and IA for husbands.

Roberts (2000) found that all withdrawal styles were related to marital distress $F(4, 92) = 9.12$, $p < .001$. So, when withdrawal was used, it was related to higher levels

of marital distress. However, the husbands' marital satisfaction was more related to wives' withdrawal than hostility. Wives' marital satisfaction was more related to husbands' hostility than withdrawing behaviors. "IRPQ ratings of HR and AW were significantly related to the observed frequency of the partner's hostile behavior" (p. 699). IA was statistically significantly related to observed withdrawal behaviors for husbands but not for wives. CA was not related to frequency of hostility and observed withdrawal behaviors, as predicted by the author.

Russell-Chapin, Chapin, and Sattler (2001) found conflicting results when they studied conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction. They found no relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction in a sample of 30 couples. They did find that conflict over parenting ($r = .81$, $p < .01$) and time together as a couple ($r = .61$, $p < .01$) correlated with marital satisfaction. Marital satisfaction was measured by the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI; Snyder, 1981). However, the sample size was small ($n = 30$) and not ethnically diverse. In addition, one of the measures consisted of eight questions devised by the researchers but only one question was used in analysis ("How well was the conflict resolved?") and no psychometric properties were reported. In addition, conflict resolution style was measured by the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI; Porter, 1997), which was designed as an educational instrument, not an assessment tool. Therefore, one needs to question the results and interpretation of results.

Most of the research reviewed supports a correlation between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction. The research supports the idea that couples with positive conflict resolution styles tend to have higher marital satisfaction. The research also

supports the notion that couples with negative conflict resolution styles tend to have lower marital satisfaction. Discussed next is the literature on the negative effects of marital conflict on children.

Marital Conflict and Child Outcomes

Gottman et al. (1997) claimed that EC can buffer children against the negative consequences of marital conflict. Marital conflict has been shown to negatively affect children's relationships with others, their health, and their behavior (Dadds et al., 1999; Marcus, Lindahl, & Malik, 2001; Stocker & Youngblade, 1999). Stocker and Youngblade conducted a study of 166 families on marital conflict and children's conflict in relationships (peer and sibling). Marital conflict was measured using the O'Leary-Porter Scale (OPS; Porter & O'Leary, 1980) and the Marital Interaction Coding System (MICS; Weiss & Summers, 1983). Children reported on their parents' relationship through the Family Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire (FEEQ; Greenberg, Kusche, & Cook, 1991), the Parent-child Interaction Video Coding System (PIVCS; Stocker, Ahmed, & Stall, 1995), and Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych, Seid, & Fincham, 1992). Results suggest a statistically significant but weak correlation between marital conflict and children's poor peer and sibling relationships ($p < .01$; sibling warmth $r = -.17$, sibling conflict $r = .25$, and sibling rivalry $r = .26$).

Children of parents with high marital conflict might have poor relationships with their peers and siblings because they learn poor conflict resolution skills from their parents. One study investigated 57 two-parent families with children between 10 and 13

years of age and explored marital conflict and children's ability to resolve conflict (Goodman, Barfoot, Frye, & Belli, 1999). The measures used for marital conflict were the Interparental Conflict Questionnaire (ICQ; Forehand & McCombs, 1989), the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979), and the CPIC. The Alternative Solutions Test (Caplan, Weissberg, Bersoff, Ezekoqitz, & Wells, 1988) was used to measure the children's ability to solve problems. The authors conducted a multiple regression analysis to determine which variables had the greatest influence on the children's ability to solve their own problems. Variables in the regression that were statistically significant were child's gender (step 1), conflict frequency (step 2), mother's aggressive tactics and escalation (step 3), and aggressive tactics multiplied by frequency and escalation of conflicts multiplied by frequency (step 4). Results (after step 4) suggest that when mothers use aggressive tactics during marital conflict and the conflict escalates, their children have a lower ability to solve their own problems, r^2 change = .11, $F(2,49)$ change = 3.79, $p < .05$. The results for fathers were not statistically significant nor was a trend reported.

In another study of 115 families with children between second and sixth grades, Marcus et al. (2001) found that the effects of interparental conflict on children's aggression are different depending on context. The authors used the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1995) and Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale (CPIC; Grych et al., 1992) to measure interparental conflict. Problem-solving style was assessed by the Normative Beliefs About Aggression Scale (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). The authors found a direct

relationship between interparental conflict and aggression in the home environment (r's ranged from .30 to .34, p's ranged from .05 to .01). However, the relationship between interparental conflict and aggression in school was mediated by "aggressogenic cognitions" ($r = .35$, $p < .05$; p. 317), which is the belief that aggression (physical and verbal) is an acceptable way to solve problems. The authors hypothesized that children may respond with aggression to solve problems more at home because they have a harder time regulating their emotions in the context of the immediate marital conflict, rather than at school, where marital conflict is not in the immediate context.

Children's showing aggression is one way they may react to their parents' marital distress. However, there are a number of different ways children can respond to distress. Children's reactions to marital distress is often measured in terms of externalizing or internalizing behavior. Externalizing behaviors include aggression, hyperactivity, and noncompliance. Internalizing behaviors include withdrawing, shyness, anxiety, or depression. In a series of three studies, Dadds and colleagues (1999) studied parents' conflict resolutions styles, severity of conflict, and children's adjustment (externalizing and internalizing behaviors). The first study included 158 participants, the second included 65 participants, and the third had 232 participants. All participants were between the ages of 10 and 14. Conflict resolution styles in this study included avoiding, attacking, and discussing.

Dadds et al. (1999) found that marital conflict styles and severity of conflict were related to children's externalizing and/or internalizing behavior. The authors found that boys who exhibited more internalizing behavior tended to have mothers with an attacking

style (ß = .26) and fathers with an avoiding style (ß = .32), as well as being exposed to high levels of severe conflict $F(1, 60) = 3.26$, $p = .05$. High levels of severe conflict also were related to girls' internalizing behaviors $F(1, 91) = 4.05$, $p = .05$ as well as having fathers and mothers with an attacking style (ß = .45 for fathers, ß = .32 for mothers). With regard to externalizing behaviors, self-blame for their parents' marital conflict significantly predicted boys' externalizing behaviors (ß = .51, $p < .001$). Girls' externalizing behavior was predicted by the severity of marital conflict $F(1, 118) = 11.34$, $p < .01$. These studies show that marital conflict resolution styles can influence child outcomes, but the authors did not discuss how parents with different conflict resolution styles interact with their children.

Behavior problems can be noticed at home or in other contexts, especially at school. A great source of knowledge regarding children's behavior and social adjustment is their school teachers. One study (Katz & Gottman, 1993) found that when both husband and wife showed contempt and belligerence as well as the wife's showing anger, their children were high in externalizing behaviors ($r = .54$, $p < .01$). That is, couples that displayed hostility during conflict had children who were rated as showing antisocial behaviors by their teachers. In addition, children rated as anxious and withdrawn by teachers had fathers who displayed anger and who withdrew emotionally during marital conflict ($r = .53$, $p < .001$). The authors also found that marital satisfaction was low in couples who exhibited contempt or when the wives reported higher levels of anger ($r = -.32$, $p < .05$). The sample consisted of 56 families with a child four to five years of age. This study collected data at two points in time. During time one, the study assessed

marital satisfaction using the MSI. Marital conflict was assessed through observational data of the couple's discussing a marital problem and coded using Specific Affect Coding System (SPAFF; Gottman, 1989). Child temperament was measured by the EAS Temperament Survey for Children (Buss & Plomin, 1984). Time two, three years later, assessed child behavior problems using the Teacher Report Form of the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL; Achenbach, 1991) and the Children's Adaptive Behavior Inventory (CABI; Cowan & Cowan, 1990).

Included in the discussion of marital conflict and child outcomes is the effect of physical marital conflict. Researchers explored the relationship between physical marital conflict and child behaviors of 90 two-parent families with a child 8 to 11 years of age (Gordis, Margolin, & John, 1997). Each parent filled out the Potential Family Conflict questionnaire (Margolin, 1992) and the Domestic Conflict Inventory (Margolin, Burman, John, & O'Brien, 1990). Observational data were coded using a system developed by the authors. The authors reported that the more boys experienced physical marital conflict, the more they were withdrawn ($r = .47$, $p < .01$), anxious ($r = .39$, $p < .01$), and distracted ($r = .40$, $p < .01$). However, for girls, physical marital conflict was related to distraction only ($r = .34$, $p < .05$; Gordis et al.).

Gordis et al. (1997) touched on how children respond emotionally to marital conflict by assessing their anxiety levels. Child outcomes usually focus on the child's behavior, which is a manifestation of the child's emotions, but a few researchers have looked specifically at the child's emotional reaction to marital conflict. Harrist and Ainslie (1998) explored the quality of the parent-child relationship and the child's ability

to correctly identify others' emotions (child interpersonal awareness) as mediating factors between marital conflict and child outcome, specifically, social withdrawal and aggression. The sample consisted of 45 five-year-old children and their mothers. Marital conflict was measured by the DAS Consensus Scale (Spanier, 1976) and the Life Events Survey (Sarason, Johnson, & Siegal, 1978) was used to assess negative effects of interparental conflict. Structured interviews were conducted to assess quality of parent-child relationship and time spent with the child weekly in structured tasks and playtime, which were scored by the Interpersonal Awareness Test (IAT; Borke, 1971). The last measure used was the CBCL to assess child problem behaviors. Results indicated that although there was a statistically significant positive correlation between marital conflict and child withdrawal ($r = .53$, $p < .01$), the child's interpersonal awareness skill and quality of parent-child relationship each reduced this correlation and therefore were seen as mediating factors ($F = 5.58$, $p < .05$). Harrist and Ainslie (1998) suggested that when marital discord is present, children can be buffered from negative effects when the parents maintain a positive relationship with their children.

Crockenberg and Langrock (2001) also found a link between children's emotional responses to marital conflict and child outcomes. The sample consisted of 164 two-parent families with a child five to six years of age. Marital conflict was measured by combining seven items from the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979) and eight items from the Marital Conflict Questionnaire (MCQ; Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981). The Parent-child Conflict Interview (PINT; Crockenberg, Jackson, & Langrock, 1996) was used to assess how the parents resolved conflict with their children. Child emotional reaction and

behavior were measured using the Child Conflict Interview (CINT; Stein & Levine, 1989) and the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991). Regression analysis showed that when boys responded with anger to their fathers' aggression during marital conflicts, they tended to exhibit externalizing behaviors ($ß = .31$, $B = 11.90$, $p < .05$, $\Delta R^2 = .10$); while boys' responses of fear predicted internalizing behaviors ($ß = .48$, $B = 9.77$, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .23$). However, girls' responses of fear and anger predicted internalizing behaviors ($ß = .32$, $B = 5.06$, $p < .01$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$). The authors concluded that the child's ability to regulate emotions results in less externalizing behavior and that the ability to regulate emotions is a behavior learned from parents. The authors did not conjecture on how emotional regulation affects internalizing behavior.

Gottman's concept of ME focuses on one's ability to regulate emotions. El-Sheikh, Harger, and Whitson (2001) conducted a study exploring marital conflict and child outcomes, specifically externalizing/internalizing behavior, emotional regulation, and physical health. These authors measured the children's ability to regulate themselves emotionally by assessing the child's vagal nerve response, specifically comparing a baseline vagal tone with changes in that baseline after listening to an audio recording of an unknown couple's arguing. El-Sheikh et al. described vagal tone:

> Vagal tone (the tenth cranial nerve) has been identified as one component of physiological regulation, and is an index of the parasympathetic nervous system's influence on the heart (e.g., Porges, 1991). . . . Higher vagal tone has been associated with adaptive adjustment, including appropriate emotional regulation (Fox, 1989; Gottman & Katz, 1989; Linnemeyer & Porges, 1986; Suess, Porges, & Plude, 1994); social competency (Doussard-Roosevelt, Porges, Scanlon, Alemi, & Scanonlon, 1997; Richards, 1985); attentional processes (DiPietro & Porges, 1991; Porges & Humphrey, 1977); and behavioral regulation (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 1996). (p. 1618 - 1619)

The sample consisted of 75 mothers with at least one child 8-12 years of age. Marital conflict was measured by the CTS2, OPS, and the Conflict and Problem-solving Scale (CPS; Kerig, 1996). The children filled out the CTS-child version of the CTS2. Children's behavior problems were assessed by mothers' filling out the CBCL. The children filled out the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS; Reynolds & Richmond, 1978), Child Depression Inventory (CDI; Kovacs, 1985), and the Self-perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1982, 1985). Finally, children's health was assessed by the mothers' filling out the Cornell Medical Index (CMI; Brodman, Erdmann, & Wolff, 1960) and Rand Corporation Health Insurance Scale (RHS; Eisen, Donald, & Ware, 1980). Results indicated that children with a higher vagal tone showed fewer externalizing ($r = .29$, $p < .05$) and internalizing behaviors (r's ranging from .28 to .38, p's ranging from $< .05$ to $< .01$), and fewer health problems than children with lower vagal tones (r's ranging from .35 to .56, $p < .01$). The authors concluded that children's ability to regulate their emotions and therefore having higher vagal tone buffers them against the negative impact of verbal and physical marital conflict.

The literature reviewed suggests a connection between marital conflict and negative child outcomes. El-Sheikh et al. (2001) suggested that children's learning to regulate their emotions can buffer these negative outcomes. This finding is supported by Gottman et al. (1997). Gottman et al. also have suggested that using EC parenting style is a factor in teaching children how to regulate their emotions and, therefore, may buffer the negative effects of marital conflict on the children.

Parenting

Family scientists have conducted many studies to explore the relationship between marriage and parenting. This relationship is important in order to understand possible ways to buffer children against the negative consequences of marital conflict through parenting. The spillover hypothesis suggests one way that marriage affects parenting. Krishnakumar and Buehler's (2000) meta-analysis of studies published from 1981 through 1998 showed support for the spillover hypothesis, which states that emotions, affect, and moods created in the marital dyad spillover into the parent-child dyad. Specifically, the authors concluded that the body of literature at that time showed that marital conflict can interfere with parenting, especially parents' using harsher discipline and showing less acceptance of children's behaviors (effect size d = -.62).

There appears to be no statistically significant relationship between marital negativity and positive parenting, but there does appear to be a relationship between marital negativity and negative parenting (Kitzmann, 2000). Kitzmann examined the ways that marital conflict affects children through changes in family alliances and parenting styles. The sample consisted of 40 families with a boy at least six years of age. The Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) was used to assess marital satisfaction. The Children's Exposure/Reactions to Marital Disagreements (Jouriles et al., 1991) was used to assess the frequency with which the child observed marital conflict. Other data for the study were gathered through observations of the marital couple and family interactions, which were coded using the System for Coding Interactions and Family Functioning (SCIFF; Lindahl & Malik, 1991, 1994). Results indicated that after a

conflictual interaction in the marriage, fathers were less engaged and supportive of their sons than after a nonconflictual interaction $t(39) = 2.34$, $p < .05$. The mothers' scores of support/engagement toward their sons after conflictual interaction were not statistically significantly correlated. After a nonconflictual interaction, parents showed "democratic parenting;" those same couples showed "disrupted or nondemocratic parenting" after conflictual interaction $x^2(1, n = 40) = 35.23$, $p < .001$ (Kitzmann, p. 8).

> The level of negativity that couples expressed during the marital discussion (regardless of topic) was [statistically] significantly correlated with several qualities of the subsequent family interaction: specifically, lower family cohesion, lower support/engagement by fathers [and mothers], more family negativity, lower family warmth, and less democratic parenting. (Kitzmann, p. 8)

Another study that supports the spillover hypothesis was conducted by Katz and Woodin (2002). The authors examined 113 couples' marital interaction and functioning in the family such as parenting, co-parenting, and child functioning. This study separated the children into two groups: a group diagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) and a control group. Marital interactions were coded using the Specific Affect Coding System (Gottman, 1989), while family and co-parenting interaction were coded using the Family-level and Co-parenting Interaction Coding System (FICS; Katz, Low, Young, & Kahm, 1997). Parent-child interaction was coded using the Forbidden Toy Coding System (FTCS; Mittmann & Katz, 1997) to assess parental use of directives, bargaining, and distraction. Results suggest that couples that were categorized as hostile-detached (both partners were hostile when speaking and withdrew when listening to their partners) used more commands and power-assertive methods of discipline with their children than conflict-engaged couples (couples who did

not withdraw in the listening role and use more positives than negatives in the speaking role during marital conflict; $F = 5.29$, $p < .01$). Couples who were hostile (do not withdraw but use more negatives than positives when speaking) used more bargaining/distraction than conflict engagers ($F = 3.57$, $p < .05$). This study shows how marital conflict resolution styles relate to parents' interactions with their children.

Some studies in the literature categorize parenting into styles instead of discussing aspects of parenting. Baumrind's (1967) parenting styles of authoritative, authoritarian, neglectful, and indulgent have been used in many studies (e.g., Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992). Other parenting styles often discussed are based on Baumrind's parenting styles; for example, the parenting categories of democratic (collaborative problem-solving with child's input encouraged), hierarchical (one or both parents' holding authority and child's input not encouraged), and lax or inconsistent (no authority figure or contradictory and undermining styles between parents; Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992, 1994). In a series of studies consisting of 113 families with boys age 7 to 11, two researchers explored marital conflict and the three parenting styles mentioned previously (Lindahl & Malik, 1999a, 1999b). In study one, parenting was measured by the SCIFF; parents' self-report scores correlated with coders' scores on the SCIFF. Marital conflict was measured by the OPS and the subscale Conflict over Childrearing from the MSI. Results suggest that the three parenting types (democratic, hierarchical, and inconsistent) differed in their relationship with amount of marital conflict. When testing for statistical significance, results showed

that overt conflict was significant $F(2, 103) = 3.94$, $p < .05$. The authors then reported post hoc analyses using Bonferroni correlations; however, the authors did not provide correlational statistics, only the statistical significance levels. The authors reported that results from the post hoc analyses suggested that hierarchical parents reported more overt conflict than did democratic parents (means for hierarchical were 12.28 with *SD* of 6.76 for mothers and 14.84 with *SD* of 6.84 for fathers; means for democratic were 11.04 with *SD* of 5.47 for mothers and 10.00 with *SD* of 5.80 for fathers, $p < .01$), but less than inconsistent parents (means were 14.90 with *SD* of 7.27 for mothers and 15.47 with *SD* of 6.99 for fathers, $p < .01$). Democratic parents also reported less overt martial conflict than did inconsistent parents (see means and *SD* above, $p < .05$ for mothers and $p < .01$ for fathers; Lindahl & Malik, 1999a).

In study two, marital distress was measured by the Global Distress Scale of the MSI. Marital interactions were measured by the System for Coding Interactions in Dyads (Malik & Lindahl, 1996). Parenting was measured by the SCIFF. Moreover, when fathers perceived their interactions with their spouses as destructive, they interacted with their children with more rejection and less emotional support $F(2, 107) = 4.65$, $p < .01$. On the other hand, when mothers saw their interactions with their spouses as destructive, they withdrew from their children $F(2, 107) = 3.57$, $p < .05$ (Lindahl & Malik, 1999b).

The spillover hypothesis (Krishnakumar & Buehler, 2000) may explain why couples with positive conflict resolution skills show more positive parenting than those with negative conflict resolution skills. Negative tactics during conflict may result in negative affect and moods that then carry over into interactions with children. However,

if couples resolve conflict through positive tactics, which then produce positive affect and moods, they may be able to resolve conflict with their children using positive parenting skills. It also is possible that couples who have high marital satisfaction have positive affect and moods that then carry over into the parent-child dyad through parenting, and vice versa for couples with low marital satisfaction. It may be that couples who have positive conflict resolution styles and/or high marital satisfaction may be high in ME as well because they are able to regulate their emotions and interact positively with their children regarding emotions. The current study aimed to examine this possibility.

The research reviewed provides evidence to suggest a relationship between marital conflict and negative parenting practices. However, further research is needed to explore concepts of parenting other than Baumrind's parenting styles, such as ME parenting. The relationships among conflict resolution styles, marital satisfaction, and ME parenting styles have not been studied widely. Gottman et al. (1997) explored the relationships among these variables. ME was measured by a semi-structured interview (Katz & Gottman, 1986) developed by the authors and was coded by a checklist rating system also developed by Hooven (1994). Marital satisfaction was measured by a telephone version of the MSI (Krokoff, 1984) and an oral history interview developed by the authors. The oral history interview was videotaped and coded by a coding system developed by the authors. Marital conflict was measured by videotaped observations of the couples' discussing two problem areas in their marriages. These data were coded by the Rapid Couple Interaction Coding System (RCICS; Krokoff, Gottman, & Hass, 1989) and the Specific Affect Coding System (Gottman, 1989). Parenting was measured by

videotaped observations of the parents' asking their child to retell a story they heard earlier while the child was playing a videogame. These data were coded by the SPAFF, the Kahen Engagement Coding System (Kahen, 1995), the Kahen Affect Coding System (Kahen), and the Cowan and Cowan Coding System (Cowan & Cowan, 1982).

Gottman and colleagues' (1997) findings were that couples that use the ME parenting style of EC use more affection (correlations ranged from .28 to .31, $p < .05$) during marital conflict. In addition, they use fewer negative strategies during marital conflict such as disgust (correlations ranged from .23 to .69, $p < .05$ to .001), belligerence (correlations ranged from .25 to .35, $p < .05$ to .01), and defensiveness (correlations ranged from .26 to .34, $p < .05$ to .01). Although the correlations for belligerence and defensiveness are statistically significant, they are weak. With regard to marital satisfaction, Gottman et al. found that parents who used the EC parenting style had higher marital satisfaction, "fewer serious considerations of separation and divorce, less actual separation, and, if separation did occur, shorter separations and less likelihood of divorce" (p. 201). Although many of these correlations are weak, the presence of these factors could make a difference in parenting dynamics.

Parenting and Child Outcomes

In this section, there will first be a review of three studies from the extensive literature exploring Baumrind's parenting styles and child outcomes and then a review of Gottman's ME parenting studies. As stated earlier, a majority of the research on parenting has focused on Baumrind's parenting styles or aspects of parenting based on

those styles. Three studies were conducted as part of one large longitudinal study with samples collected from nine high schools in Wisconsin and California. The 1991 sample consisted of 4,100 students, the 1992 sample consisted of 6,400 students, and the 1994 sample consisted of 2,300 students. All three studies used the same parenting measure developed by the authors (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1992, 1994). The scale assesses Baumrind's parenting styles, specifically, three factors: acceptance/involvement (authoritative), strictness/supervision (authoritarian), and psychological autonomy (indulgent). Child outcomes were also measured by questionnaires developed by the authors, all of which had high Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .72 to .82.

The results of the studies showed that adolescents whose parents were authoritative were competent and confident, had fewer behavior problems, and had high achievement and engagement in school (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al.,1992, 1994). Adolescents with authoritarian parents exhibited few behavior problems but had lower self-confidence in their abilities. Adolescents of indulgent parents scored high in self-confidence, social competence, and reported behavior problems that included high levels of peer pressure such as substance use and "school misconduct" (Lamborn et al., 1991, p. 1062; Steinberg et al., 1994). Adolescents of neglectful parents showed more behavior problems and distress and scored lower in confidence and competence (Lamborn et al., 1991; Steinberg et al., 1994).

With regard to the new concept of ME parenting styles, Gottman et al. (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of 56 couples, exploring marital satisfaction, marital conflict resolution styles, and ME parenting styles. Marital satisfaction was measured by

the Marital Satisfaction Inventory (Snyder, 1981). Conflict resolution was measured by observing the couples' discussing a marital problem. The videotapes were then coded using the Rapid Couple Interaction Coding System (Krokoff et al., 1989) and the Specific Affect Coding System (Gottman, 1989). ME parenting styles were measured using the ME interview, which is a semi-structured interview developed by the authors. Gottman et al. claim that children of parents who use EC do better academically, have fewer behavior problems, and have better health than those of the negative ME styles.

The literature reviewed here shows a connection between parenting style used and child outcomes. Although the current study did not directly address child outcomes, it is important to keep this literature in mind because the current study does focus on parenting style and marital conflict, which have been shown through this literature review to affect child outcomes.

Meta Emotion

Results from past research have indicated that the way parents interact with their children influences their children's psychological and social development (e.g., Baumrind, 1967; Steinberg et al., 1994). Traditionally, researchers interested in parenting have examined parenting style and aspects of parenting. Gottman et al. (1997) recently added to the parenting literature with the introduction of the concept of parental ME. ME refers to an "organized set of feelings and cognitions about one's own emotions and the emotions of others" (Gottman et al., p. 7). The four parenting styles based on ME are EC (accepts and identifies emotion, then problem solves), ED (disengages from emotions and

does not problem solve), disapproving (disengages from emotion, punishes negative emotion, and is concerned about obedience only), and laissez faire (accepts emotions but does not problem solve; Gottman & DeClaire, 1997).

Although the term ME is new to the literature, some of the basic beliefs have been discussed by early parenting researchers. For example, Haim Ginott (1965, 1971, 1975) believed that a parent who is willing to approach a child's emotions positively and not simply dismiss emotions validates the child's emotions. Therefore, the child is taught that all emotions are valid and should be expressed. These parents become engaged in and aware of the child's emotional world. In addition, Gottman et al. (1996) discussed the concept that parenting a child on their emotions is related to the parents' awareness of their own emotions and regulation of their emotions. Therefore, Gottman et al. proposed that parents who are aware versus those who are not aware of their own and their children's emotions parent with EC or ED style, respectively. That is, parents who are aware of their and their child's emotions tend to parent using EC; parents who are not aware of their own and their child's emotions tend to parent using ED.

Ginott (1965) claimed that emotional parenting involves self respect (parent and child) and understanding the emotional response before trying to solve problems. Through emotional parenting, the parent wants to convey that all feelings are valid and should be expressed appropriately. The opposite message is often conveyed when parents give advice before understanding their child's emotional response or discussing the emotional response as inappropriate or appropriate.

Another concept that has influenced a focus on emotions is EI (Salovey & Mayer, 1989-1990). EI has been defined as the ability to be aware of one's own and others' emotions, to identify them, and to use them to guide one's thinking and behaviors. Salovey and Mayer suggested that understanding one's own emotions depends on the ability to learn about emotions, which has been linked to the ability to talk about or label emotions. Teaching children to identify, label, and talk about emotions is one aspect of EC.

Gottman et al. (1996) conducted a study on the EC philosophy and its effects on parenting, emotional regulation, and child outcomes. The authors tested the EC philosophy to see how it related to parenting, specifically derogatory parenting and scaffolding/praising parenting. Derogatory parenting was defined as parents' being intrusive and using criticism and mockery with their children. Scaffolding/praising parenting was defined as "structuring, responsive, enthusiastic, engaged, and affectionate" (Gottman et al., p. 246). The authors found that EC parents were less derogatory (path coefficient -.48 with a *z* score of -3.91) and used more scaffolding/praising parenting (path coefficient .41 with a *z* score of 3.16). Also, children of EC parents were better able to regulate their parasympathetic nervous systems, which increased their ability to soothe themselves.

In response to Gottman et al. (1996), researchers have argued that ME is not just a philosophy but also a set of parenting behaviors (Cowan, 1996; Eisenberg, 1996). Eisenberg argued that Gottman et al. (1996) did not test ME against parenting, but "emotion-related parenting was examined as a predictor of more situationally specific

manifestations of parental derogation or scaffolding-praising" (p. 270). Eisenberg argued that the parenting behaviors (scaffolding-praising and derogation) are not directly related to children's emotional regulation abilities, but are related to child outcomes by teaching children social skills. In addition, Eisenberg argued that perhaps children with high vagal tone respond well to coaching "because they tend to be uninhibited," while those with low vagal tone do not because they "have difficulty asserting themselves and taking control" (p. 272).

Eisenberg (1996) stated that more research is needed on Gottman and colleagues' (1996) constructs to obtain a clearer picture of the relationships among the variables and to explore potential mediating variables. For example, Eisenberg argued that temperament may be a mediating variable. Gottman et al. (1996) did not find a relationship between child temperament and EC using a questionnaire of parental report of children's temperament. However, Eisenberg argued that parental reports of children's temperaments may be unreliable and that in another study, a statistically significant relationship was found between "mother's perception of children's temperament and mother's reports of their reactions to children's negative emotions" (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1994 as cited in Eisenberg, 1996, p. 274). Eisenberg argued that this finding suggests that temperament may be related to EC and, therefore, more research is needed.

Another critique by Eisenberg (1996) is that conceptualizing the relationship between coaching and outcome variables (achievement and peer relationships) is difficult because the statistics did not paint a clear picture. That is, correlations of the outcome variables alone with EC were not statistically significant; however, an indirect

relationship was significant when mediating variables were included, specifically, parenting behaviors (derogation, scaffolding-praising) and physiological responding (vagal tone). Therefore, Eisenberg stated that more research is needed on Gottman and others' (1996) data to obtain a clearer picture of the relationships among variables and to explore potential mediating variables.

Cowan (1996) suggested that further research needs to be done on ME to answer many questions. One question posed by Cowan is where ME comes from. Cowan asked, "Is a dismissing approach to emotion a cause of relationship difficulty, or can marital, parent-child, or work-related stress create or amplify the tendency of parents to dismiss emotions?" (p. 282). Cowan suggested that ME be studied over populations with different "developmental levels," such as gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age of child, and so forth to see whether the correlations hold across different contexts. In addition, Cowan suggested further research in order to understand whether and how therapeutic intervention can be used to help the family system. Gottman et al. (1996) suggested further research to look for a causal relationship rather than a correlational relationship among variables. Cowan stated, "If laboratory experiments support causal hypotheses, this will be important information for designing preventive and therapeutic interventions" (p. 282).

In response to Eisenberg (1996) and Cowan (1996), Katz et al. (1996) reported that ME is more than parenting behaviors because the behaviors stem from the parents' belief systems about emotions. The authors continued to emphasize that although ME may describe observable parental behaviors, the emphasis is on the parental attitude

towards the child's emotion rather than behaviors. In addition, Gottman et al. (1996) supported and encouraged more research on ME.

Emotional Style and Child Outcomes

Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, and Braungart (1992) conducted a study on the relationship between emotional expressiveness, understanding of emotions, and peer acceptance. Emotional expressiveness was measured by the Family Expressiveness Questionnaire (FEQ; Halberstadt, 1986) and observational data, which were coded using a system developed by the authors. The observational data were reported to have interrater reliability correlations ranging from .81 to .97. The authors designed an interview and coding system in order to measure children's understanding of emotions. Interrater reliability correlations for this interview coding ranged from .78 to 1.0. The authors found a correlation between the parents' expressiveness of emotions in the home and their children's acceptance from their peers. Children from homes in which expressing emotions was acceptable and practiced were more accepted by their peers. In addition, children who had a greater understanding of their own emotions as well as others' were more accepted by their peers. However, because the study was correlational, the authors could not show a causal pathway.

Results from Gottman and others' (1997) study that explored marital satisfaction, marital conflict resolution styles, and EC of 56 couples, indicated that EC could buffer children against the negative effects of marital conflict. In addition, Gottman and colleagues reported that the buffering effects on children from marital conflict were

statistically significant even when parents were considering divorce due to marital problems.

The links among ME parenting styles and conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction is an area that other social scientists need to explore. The current study hoped to expand the literature by exploring how marital conflict correlates with ME parenting styles to support or refute Gottman and others' (1997) findings that parents who use EC have better conflict resolution styles and higher marital satisfaction than those who use a negative ME parenting style.

Conceptual Issues

Researchers often define conflict as a univariate construct rather than examining different types of conflict such as disagreements, verbal aggression, or physical violence. In order to gain a better understanding of conflict in general, clear distinctions are needed. A second conceptual issue within the literature relates to the parenting dimensions that are explored. Due to the literature reviewed, this researcher concludes that the majority of research on parenting has focused on Baumrind's parenting styles or aspects that make up her styles. Baumrind's parenting styles focus on discipline and parental affect (e.g., warmth/hostility) and do not address the child's emotional world. ME parenting, on the other hand, addresses how the "parent feels about and relates to specific emotional displays by the child, and how this might relate to the parent's feelings about his or her own emotions" (Gottman et al., 1997, p. 13). Thus, EC addresses helping children with their own emotional regulation. Further research is needed to explore

Gottman's concept of emotional parenting. Lastly, little research has included the variables of marital conflict and marital satisfaction within the same study to see which is more strongly related to parenting.

Purpose and Objectives

The current research proposed to combine all variables discussed: marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and ME parenting styles. In addition, this study collected demographic information on the participants to examine correlations and confounding factors. Demographic variables were chosen to determine how EC and ED parents differ in terms of family dynamics and life stage variables such as age, gender, race, religion, education, income, length of marriage, number of children, age of oldest child, experience with a parenting class, and student versus nonstudent status. It was hypothesized that these factors may be related to marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and parenting practices. Marital satisfaction was defined as level of satisfaction with spouse, marriage, and the marital relationship as measured by the KMSS. The marital conflict dimensions that were measured include frequency of conflict (how often), degree of problem (how problematic), resolution (emotional state after conflicts), and efficacy (how often conflicts are resolved) as measured by the CPS. Marital conflict strategies: cooperation, avoidance, stonewalling, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and child involvement were also measured by the CPS. ME parenting styles were defined as either EC or ED as measured by the Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire (MESQ; Legace-Seguin, 2001). EC was defined as accepting and valuing emotions, helping children

identify their emotions and express them appropriately, and helping children problem solve. ED was defined as being uncomfortable with negative emotions, disengaging from children's emotions, minimizing children's emotions, and not teaching problem-solving skills. The purpose of this study was to examine relationships between marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and ME parenting styles. The research questions included:

1. How do the demographic variables relate with ME parenting styles, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction?
2. How do conflict dimensions relate with each other?
3. How do the marital conflict strategies relate with each other?
4. How do the marital conflict dimensions relate to the marital conflict strategies?
5. How do the conflict dimensions relate to marital satisfaction?
    a. How does frequency/severity of marital conflict relate with marital satisfaction?
    b. How does degree of problem (how problematic) relate with marital satisfaction?
    c. How does resolution (emotional state of couple after a conflict) relate with marital satisfaction?
    d. How does conflict efficacy (how often problems are resolved) relate with marital satisfaction?
6. How does marital satisfaction relate with marital conflict strategies?
7. How does marital satisfaction correlate with ME parenting styles?

8. How does marital conflict correlate with ME parenting styles?

    e. How do conflict styles/strategies (which strategies are used during conflict) correlate with ME parenting styles?

    f. How does conflict efficacy (how often problems are resolved) correlate with ME parenting styles?

    g. How does frequency/severity of marital conflict correlate with ME parenting styles?

    h. How does degree of problem (how problematic) correlate with ME parenting styles?

    e. How does resolution (emotional state of couple after a conflict) correlate with ME parenting styles?

METHODS

Design

The design for this study was a cross-sectional correlation, which means that the independent and dependent variables are measured at the same time to evaluate how they are associated. Correlational means that the "independent variable is measured rather than fixed by an intervention" (Dooley, 2001, p. 343), and, therefore, does not imply cause. The independent variables for this study include marital satisfaction, marital conflict dimensions (frequency/severity, degree of problem, efficacy, and resolution), and marital conflict styles/strategies (cooperation, avoidance/capitulation, stonewalling, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and child involvement). The dependent variable was ME parenting style (EC and ED).

Sample

Participants in this study consisted of 79 individuals who were currently married with at least one child between 3 and 11 years of age. The age range was chosen because early childhood appears to be when the foundation for knowledge of and understanding of emotions in self and others develops (Berk, 1997). Although understanding of emotions begins in infancy, such as detecting emotions through tone of voice and facial expressions, it is not until around age three that children develop the cognitive, emotional, and language abilities to verbalize, identify, and label emotions (Berk). In addition, the ability to generate a variety of solutions to social conflicts increases over the

preschool and early school years (Dubow & Tisak, 1989; Rubin & Krasnor, 1985; as cited in Berk); there is more opportunity for parents to engage in problem-solving with their children. Therefore, parents would be potentially engaging in all aspects of ME parenting (identifying and labeling emotions, and problem-solving) with children in this age range.

Participants were recruited from cities in Utah; specific cities were not targeted in order to increase diversity of the sample and to aid in collecting data in a timely manner. The age of participants ranged from 22 to 54. Participants' oldest child's age ranged from 3 to 26 and the number of children in the family ranged from 1 to 11. The length of marriages for participants ranged from 0 to 30 years. Education level of the participants ranged from 5 to 26 years. Approximately 50% had taken a parenting class and only 13% were students. See Table 1 and Table 2 for a complete report of demographic information. The sample consisted of 70% females, 95% Caucasian, and 80% members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS; see Table 2).

Participants were recruited through flyers posted in daycare centers, community recreation centers, grocery stores, and other places where parents would see them. The flyers contained a description of the study, participant criteria, and a request for parents to contact the researcher by phone or email if they wished to participate. Interested participants contacted the researcher by phone or by email and packets were mailed to them. In addition, participants were recruited by advertising on the Internet site, www.bardos.net This is a website facilitated by a marriage and family therapist who

Table 1

Description of Sample, Continuous Variables

	Men (n = 24)				Women (n = 55)			
Variable	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
Age	27	54	37.25	8.12	22	50	34.18	6.90
Number of children	1	8	3.19	1.70	1	11	3.05	1.48
Age of oldest child	3	25	10.04	6.85	3	26	9.33	6.08
Length of marriage	2	30	12.02	7.56	0	30	10.71	6.76
Years of education	5	22	16.17	3.26	6	26	15.64	2.69

Note. n = 54 for age of oldest child women. n = 23 for years of education men.

offers psycho-educational information, resources for the community, and information on available services (see Appendix B for flyers and Internet advertisement).

Participants were also recruited by advertising the study in Family, Consumer, and Human Development classes at Utah State University. Undergraduate and graduate level classes from the university were included. The professor of each class assisted in advertising the study by allowing an announcement in class. Professors from each class could have offered an incentive to the students who participated. This was solely the discretion of the professor; the researchers did not influence the offering of an incentive to participate in the study. However, no professor gave an incentive for participating in this study. The study was advertised by posting flyers in USU buildings on campus. In addition, flyers were sent to all married student housing at Utah State University.

Table 2

Description of Sample, Categorical Variables

	Men (n = 24)		Women (n = 55)	
Variable	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Income				
$0 - $15,000	0	0.0	4	7.3
$15,000 - $24,999	0	0.0	1	1.8
$25,000 - $34,999	1	4.2	4	7.3
$35,000 - $44,999	3	12.5	7	12.7
$45,000 - $54,999	4	16.7	8	14.5
$55,000 - $64,999	0	0.0	1	1.8
$65,000 - $74,999	1	4.2	8	14.5
$75,000 - $99,999	9	37.5	8	14.5
$100,000 - $200,000	4	16.7	12	21.8
Above $200,000	2	8.3	2	3.6
Religion				
Roman Catholic	0	0.0	2	3.6
Protestant	2	8.3	4	7.3
Latter-Day Saints	22	91.7	40	72.7
Jewish	0	0.0	0	0.0
Muslim	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	0	0.0	8	14.5
Ethnicity				
Caucasian	23	95.8	52	94.5
Asian	1	4.2	1	1.8
African American	0	0.0	0	0.0
Latino	0	0.0	1	1.8
Other	0	0.0	1	1.8
Parenting Class				
Yes	12	50.0	24	43.6
No	11	45.8	28	50.9
Student	3	12.5	7	12.7
Non-student	20	83.3	45	81.8

Interested students contacted the researcher by phone or by email and packets were mailed to them. Finally, participants were recruited through word of mouth. That is, people who were aware of the study informed people they knew of the study and the opportunity to participate. Interested people contacted the researcher directly or through the person who told them of the study. Packets were mailed to them or given to them directly or indirectly through the person who informed them of the study.

Instruments

This study explored the relationships among marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and ME parenting styles. In order to assess marital satisfaction, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale was used. The Conflicts and Problem-solving Scale was used to assess marital conflict. ME parenting styles were measured by the Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire.

Demographic Questionnaire

The researchers for this study developed a demographic questionnaire. Participants provided information on age, gender, number of children, age of oldest child, occupation, experience with parenting classes, student versus nonstudent status, length of current marriage, education, race, religion, and income.

Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

The Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS; Schumm et al., 1986) is a three-item self-report questionnaire that measures marital satisfaction, specifically, satisfaction

with the marriage, spouse, and relationship with spouse. The three items include "1. How satisfied are you with your husband/wife as a spouse? 2. How satisfied are you with your marriage? 3. How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband/wife?" (Schumm et al., 1986, p. 387). The response options consist of a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = extremely dissatisfied to 7 = extremely satisfied. The total score for the KMSS is the sum of the scores from the three items; therefore, the scores range from 3 to 21. Crane, Middleton, and Bean (2000) have established that a score of 17 or higher "indicates that the individual or couple is nondistressed, while a score of 16 or lower indicates some degree of marital distress" (p. 58). The KMSS was chosen because not only does it measure marital satisfaction, but also it is brief, economic, and has good psychometric properties.

The KMSS has yielded internal consistency reliability with Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .84 to .98 (Schumm et al., 1986). Test-retest reliability has been reported at .71 for wives over a 10-week interval (Schumm et al.) and over a six month period of .72 for husbands and .62 for wives (Mitchell, Newell, & Schumm, 1983).

The KMSS was correlated with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976) to establish discriminate validity. Results showed statistically significant correlations of .94 ($p < .001$) overall, DAS satisfaction subscale ($r = 0.86$), DAS cohesion subscale ($r = 0.82$), DAS consensus subscale ($r = 0.89$), and DAS affectional expression subscale ($r = 0.75$; Schumm et al., 1986).

Conflicts and Problem-solving Scale

The Conflicts and Problem-solving Scale (CPS; Kerig, 1996) is an 85-item self-report questionnaire that measures four dimensions of couple conflict (frequency/severity, degree of problem, resolution, and efficacy) and conflict styles/strategies. The CPS was chosen because it fits the conceptual definitions of the conflict variables this study wanted to address: frequency/severity (how often there is conflict), degree of problem (how problematic the conflict is), resolution (emotional state of couple after a conflict), efficacy (how often conflicts are resolved), and conflict styles/strategies (which strategies are used during conflict). The frequency/severity scale consists of two questions that are on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = once a year or less to 5 = just about every day. Scores for frequency/severity range from 3 to18. The degree of problem subscale consists of 22 items for which the participants report severity on a scale from 0 (no problem) to 100 (severe problem) for each item on a list of possible issues in their marriage. The responses are averaged to give an overall score. Examples of issues taken directly from the instrument include "child rearing/issues concerning child(ren)," "household tasks," "money," and "communication between us" (see Appendix A). The efficacy subscale consists of the same 22 items from the degree of problem scale; however, the participants indicate the percentage of time that conflict about each issue is resolved on a scale from 0 (never) to 100 (always; Kerig, 1996). Scoring for this scale is also an average. The resolution scale consists of 13 items on a four-point Likert scale (0 = never, 3 = usually), describing the outcome of the disagreements. Examples taken directly from the instrument include, "We feel that we've

resolved it, or come to an understanding," "We each give in a little bit to each other," and "We don't speak to one another for a while" (see Appendix A). Items are weighted by resolution quality: items 1 - 3 are multiplied by 2, items 4 and 5 are multiplied by 1, and items 6 - 13 are multiplied by -2. Therefore, scores on this scale range from -48 to 24.

> These resolutions range from highly positive and resulting in increased intimacy (e.g., "We feel closer to one another than before the fight"; scored 2) to highly negative, involving continued or escalating acrimony (e.g., "We end up feeling angry and annoyed with each other"; scored –2). The midpoint reflects unclear or partial resolution [such as, "We don't resolve the issue, but agree to disagree," scored 1]. (Kerig, p. 458)

The conflict strategies scale includes the following strategies: "cooperation," "avoidance/capitulation," "stonewalling," "verbal aggression," "physical aggression," and "child involvement" (see Appendix A for all instruments used in the study). Participants respond to a four-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = never to 3 = often on 46 items. The scores on the conflict strategies scale range from 0 to 138. Participants responded to the 46 items twice, once reporting on themselves and then reporting on their perceptions of their partners. The last two items of the questionnaire are not included in the scoring system of the measure and were used in this study to correlate with marital satisfaction from the KMSS. The last two questions ask about satisfaction with conflict strategy and overall relationship satisfaction.

Kerig (1996) reported reliability and validity from a sample of 273 couples. Coefficient alphas for wives and husbands respectively for the conflict dimensions were reported as follows: frequency/severity (.75 and .78), degree of problem (.98 and .98), resolution (.79 and .79), and efficacy (.94 and .91). The reliability coefficient alphas for the conflict strategies were as follows for wives and husbands respectively: collaboration

(.86 and .86), avoidance-capitulation (.70 and .74), stonewalling (.76 and .78), verbal aggression (.85 and .84), physical aggression (.83 and .87), and child involvement (.81 and .85).

The CPS showed high validity when compared to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976); correlations ranging from -.78 to .75 for wives, and -.70 to .77 for husbands; Kerig, 1996), Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979; correlations ranging from -.43 to .63 for wives, -.66 to .80 for husbands), and O'Leary-Porter Scale (Porter & O'Leary, 1980; correlations ranging from -.72 to .77 for wives and -.66 to .68 for husbands; Kerig). Test-retest correlations are reported to range from .53 to .87, with a median correlation of .63 (Kerig).

Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire

The MESQ (Legace-Seguin, 2001) is a self-report instrument consisting of 14 items with a five-point Likert response scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The MESQ has two subscales: EC and ED. The components that make up ME include (a) awareness of one's own emotions, (b) awareness of child's emotions, and (c) coaching the child's emotion.

> Parents who are aware of the emotions in their lives, who can talk about these emotions in a differentiated manner, who are aware of these emotions in their children, and who assist their children with their emotions are said to be EC. ED parents feel that emotions are potentially harmful to the child. . . . They lack awareness of emotions within themselves and their children, fear being emotionally out-of-control, are unaware of techniques to address negative emotions, and believe negative emotions to be a reflection of poor parenting skills. (Legace-Seguin, pp. 15-16)

The MESQ was chosen because it is the only known paper and pencil measure available designed to measure the ME parenting styles of EC and ED. When first developed, this measure was called Parental Emotional Style Questionnaire (Legace-Seguin, 2001). However, the sample it was tested on consisted of mothers only; therefore, it was renamed the MESQ (D. Legace-Seguin, personal communication, January 31, 2005). Legace-Seguin is in the process of testing the instrument for fathers. The current study used the instrument on fathers as well as mothers, thereby testing its validity. Participants were asked to fill out the MESQ on their oldest child within age criteria.

Items for the MESQ were derived from Gottman and others' (1996, 1997) ME interview (Legace-Seguin, 2001). A factor analysis of data from that study resulted in two loadings: EC (.81 to .87) and ED (.83 to .88; Legace-Seguin). These two factors accounted for 67.4% of the variance of the scores. Legace-Seguin reported Cronbach's alphas for the two scales as .92 for ED and .90 for EC. The item scale correlations for the two subscales were reported "for ED, ranging between $r = .79$ and $r = .88$ and for EC, between $r = .78$ and $r = .86$" (p. 59). Test-retest reliability at six months was reported as $r = .58$ ($p < .01$) for ED and $r = .53$ ($p < .01$) for EC (Legace-Seguin).

Procedures

Two hundred and three study packets were mailed to participants who requested them by contacting the researcher by phone or email. Out of the 203 packets mailed out, 99 packets were returned; however, 20 of the packets were unusable due to missing data, resulting in a usable sample of 79 (the response rate was 49%). The packet consisted of

an informed consent, demographic questionnaire, self-addressed return envelope, and the study questionnaires (see Appendix A for all study materials). Putting codes rather than names on questionnaires protected the participants' identities. After receiving packets, codes were checked against names. After all packets were received, the list of potential participants and links were destroyed. Informed consent forms were stored separately from the data and did not contain codes. Thus, data were anonymous and the researcher could not identify individuals.

Analyses

The instruments were gathered and scored, and scores were entered into an SPSS database. Scales/subscales from the CPS, the KMSS, and the MESQ were checked for reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alphas, which ranged from .55 to .96. The reliability alphas for each variable are reported in Table 3.

Unfortunately, the MESQ did not have adequate reliability scores for EC ($\alpha = .65$) and ED ($\alpha = .63$). A factor analysis indicated more than two factor loadings. The instrument was developed on a female only sample; therefore, reliability tests were conducted on the MESQ separated by gender to determine its reliability for females. Unfortunately, these results also suggested that the instrument was not reliable for this sample. The coefficients for females were α (EC) = .69 and α (ED) = .64; for males, the coefficients were α (EC) = .49 and α (ED) = .62. Therefore, the MESQ was found to be unreliable. Lack of reliability on the MESQ calls into questions the validity of the measure, which makes further analysis questionable. Therefore, analyses for research

Table 3

Reliability Coefficients of Variables (Cronbach's alpha)

	Participant	Partner
Marital satisfaction	0.96	
Conflict dimensions		
Frequency/severity	0.74	
Degree of problem	0.85	
Conflict efficacy	0.85	
Conflict resolution	0.55	
Conflict strategies		
Cooperation	0.70	0.84
Avoidance	0.67	0.73
Stonewalling	0.70	0.64
Verbal aggression	0.84	0.86
Physical aggression	0.65	0.73
Child involvement	0.65	0.70
Emotion coaching	0.65	
Emotion dismissing	0.63	

Note. $n = 79$.

questions related to marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and ME were not conducted.

Correlational analyses were conducted to examine data for the remaining research questions related to demographics, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction. However, correlations were not run on variables with reliability alpha coefficients below .70. Therefore, analyses will not be reported for conflict resolution ($\alpha = .55$) and the following of conflict strategies for participants: avoidance ($\alpha = .67$), physical aggression ($\alpha = .65$), and child involvement ($\alpha = .65$). In addition, analyses using participants' perceptions of their partners' use of stonewalling ($\alpha = .64$) will not be reported. What is interesting

about the reliability results is that participants' scores for perception of their partners' behavior during conflicts had more agreement (which is seen by higher Cronbach's alpha coefficients) than participants' views of their own behavior during conflicts.

Pearson correlations were conducted to determine how the variables with acceptable reliability scores correlated with each other, how conflict strategies correlated with conflict dimensions, how conflict strategies correlated with each other, and how conflict strategies and dimensions correlated with marital satisfaction. Of specific interest were correlations that explain 10% or more of the covariance among variables. These will be reported in the results section.

Frequencies for marital satisfaction, conflict dimensions (frequency/severity, degree of problem, conflict efficacy, and conflict resolution), and conflict strategies (cooperation, avoidance, stonewalling, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and child involvement) are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Strategies

Variable	Min.	Max.	Mean	*SD*
Marital satisfaction	6.00	21.00	17.94	2.99
Conflict dimensions				
Freq/severity	4.00	16.00	7.66	3.09
Degree of problem	1.25	40.25	15.72	10.01
Efficacy	16.00	100.00	80.05	15.80
Resolution	38.00	24.00	6.66	12.87
Conflict strategies				
Participant				
Cooperation	10.00	18.00	15.46	2.22
Avoidance	5.00	26.00	16.45	4.08
Stonewalling	0.00	17.00	6.70	3.75
Verbal aggression	2.00	24.00	11.24	4.94
Physical aggression	0.00	5.00	0.61	1.20
Child involvement	0.00	11.00	5.35	2.82
Conflict strategies				
Partner				
Cooperation	5.00	18.00	14.16	3.09
Avoidance	4.00	26.00	16.49	4.93
Stonewalling	0.00	15.00	5.22	3.25
Verbal aggression	0.00	24.00	10.39	4.79
Physical aggression	0.00	6.00	0.81	1.52
Child involvement	0.00	14.00	5.11	3.03

Note. $n = 79$.

RESULTS

The MESQ did not show adequate reliability for EC and ED. Lack of reliability on the MESQ calls into question the validity of the measure, which makes analyses using the MESQ questionable. Therefore, analyses for the research questions related to ME parenting styles were not conducted.

However, correlational analyses were conducted for the other research questions related to demographics, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction. Pearson correlations were conducted to examine how the demographic variables correlated with conflict strategies, conflict dimensions, and marital satisfaction; how the different conflict strategies correlated with each other; how conflict strategies correlated with conflict dimensions; and how conflict strategies and dimensions correlated with marital satisfaction.

Research Question 1: How Do the Demographic Variables Relate with Marital Conflict and Marital Satisfaction?

Relationships between the dependent variables of marital satisfaction and marital conflict and the demographic variables were examined. No statistically significant associations were found for demographics and marital satisfaction. A few of the demographic variables were found to have statistically significant correlations with marital conflict variables. The age of the oldest child was statistically and negatively associated with frequency/severity scores of marital conflict($r = .26, p < .05$); however, this is a weak association, which is defined as less than 10% of the variance. That is,

when the age of the oldest child was higher, the frequency/severity scores were somewhat lower. When income scores were high, participants' stonewalling ($r = .28$, $p < .01$) and participants' perception of partners' use of child involvement ($r = .23$, $p < .05$) strategy scores were low; however, both of these are weak associations. Therefore, the age of oldest child was associated with lower scores of frequency/severity of marital conflict. In addition, higher income was associated with lower scores on the negative conflict strategies.

The *t* tests were conducted on conflict variables to determine whether they differed by student status, whether participants had taken a parenting class or not, gender, and religion. The results showed no differences between groups for student and non-student status, parenting class and no parenting class, and religion. However, there were differences between groups for gender. These differences were found for participants' use of cooperation conflict strategy $t(77) = -2.49$, $p < .05$, participants' stonewalling $t(77) = -3.15$, $p < .01$, and participants' perception of their partners' use of physical aggression $t(77) = 2.06$, $p < .05$ (see Tables 5 and 6).Therefore, women participants reported higher scores on their use of cooperation and stonewalling than male participants. However, male participants' perceptions of their partners' using physical aggression were higher than female participants' perception of their partners' use of physical aggression. Therefore, the only demographic variables that were related to marital conflict were age of oldest child, income level, and gender.

Table 5

Means of Conflict Strategies by Gender

	Men			Women		
Variable	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Participant						
Cooperation	24	14.54	2.08	55	15.85	2.18
Stonewalling	24	4.79	1.96	55	7.53	4.05
Perception of partner physical aggression	24	1.33	1.81	55	0.58	1.33

Table 6

t tests: Conflict Strategies by Gender

	t	df	Mean difference	Significance level
Participant				
Cooperation	-2.49	77	-1.31	.015*
Stonewalling	-3.15	77	-2.74	.002**
Perception of partner physical aggression	-2.06	77	0.75	.042*

Note. Negative difference suggests higher mean for men; *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$

Research Question 2: How do Conflict Dimensions Relate with Each Other?

Conflict dimensions were examined for how they related with each other. A relationship was found between frequency/severity of conflicts and the perception of the seriousness of problems (degree of problem) and the percentage of times conflicts were resolved (conflict efficacy). That is, frequency/severity scores were high when degree of problem ($r = .49$, $p < .001$) scores were high and conflict efficacy scores were low (conflict efficacy; $r = -.25$, $p < .05$). However, the conflict efficacy correlation is weak, while degree of problem correlation was moderate. See Table 7 for correlations of conflict dimensions with each other.

Table 7

Correlations of Conflict Dimensions

Variable	Frequency/severity	Degree of problem	Conflict efficacy
Frequency/severity	___		
Degree of problem	.490***	___	
Conflict efficacy	-.254*	-.518***	___

Note. $n = 79$; Conflict efficacy scale $n = 78$. Conflict resolution scale was not included due to low reliability score; $*p < .05$. $***p < .001$

Research Question 3: How Do the Marital Conflict Strategies Relate with Each Other?

Results suggest that there was a negative relationship between positive conflict strategies and negative conflict strategies. That is, participants who used positive conflict strategies tended not to use negative conflict strategies. For example, participants' cooperation scores were high when participants' verbal aggression scores were low (r = .35, $p < .01$). The strength of the relationships is low, however, suggesting that many participants used both positive and negative strategies (r^2 ranging from .07 to .35). In addition, results suggest positive relationships among the negative conflict strategies with each other; for example, participants' scores of stonewalling were high when participants' verbal aggression (r = .56, $p < .001$) scores were high. This is a moderate relationship, explaining 31% of the variance. Therefore, participants' high scores on one negative conflict strategy were correlated with participants' high scores on another negative conflict strategy and low scores of the positive conflict strategy (see Table 8 for correlations among participant conflict strategies).

The results of analyses using participants' perceptions of their partners' conflict strategies were similar to those of the participant self reports. A relationship was found between the positive conflict strategy of cooperation and the negative conflict strategies (see Table 9 for correlations among perception of partner conflict strategies). For example, perceptions of partners' cooperation scores were high when perception of partners' use of avoidance (r = .26, $p < .05$), physical aggression (r = .33, $p < .01$), verbal aggression (r = .45, $p < .001$), and child involvement (r = .38, $p < .001$) scores were low.

Table 8

Correlations of Participant Conflict Strategies

Variable	Cooperation	Stonewalling	Verbal aggression
Cooperation	____		
Stonewalling	-.058	____	
Verbal aggression	-.349**	.560***	____

Note. $n = 79$; Avoidance, physical aggression, and child involvement scales were not included due to low reliability scores; ** $p < .01$ two-tailed. *** $p < .001$ two-tailed

The strength of these relationships, however, are not high but moderate, except avoidance, which is weak. In addition, relationships were found among the different conflict strategies (see Table 9). For example, perceptions of partners' use of avoidance scores were high when participants perceived their partners as using verbal aggression ($r = .27, p < .05$) and child involvement ($r = .33, p < .01$). This relationship between perception of partners' avoidance and participants' verbal aggression is weak but statistically significant. Of no surprise to family therapists, results showed that participants' perceptions of partners' verbal aggression scores were high when participants' perception of partners' physical aggression ($r = .53, p < .001$) scores were high. The relationship statistically significant and moderately correlated as well, explaining 28% of the variance. A strong association was found between perceptions of partners' verbal aggression with partners' perception of child involvement ($r = .67, p < .001$), explaining 45% of the variance. Therefore, participants' perceptions of partners'

Table 9

Correlations of Perception of Partner Conflict Strategies

Variable	Coop.	Avoid.	Verbal aggress.	Physical aggress.	Child involve.
Cooperation	____				
Avoidance	-.257*	____			
Verbal aggression	-.453***	.267*	____		
Physical aggression	-.332**	.155	.530***	____	
Child involvement	-.375***	.326**	.666***	.351**	____

Note. $n = 79$. Stonewalling scale was not included due to low reliability scores;

*$p < .05$ two-tailed, **$p < .01$ two-tailed, ***$p < .001$ two-tailed

use of one negative conflict strategy was statistically significantly correlated with participants' perceptions of partners' use of the other negative conflict strategies.

Correlations among participants' and perception of partners' scores are interesting. Perceptions of partners' avoidance scores were high when participants' stonewalling ($r = .42$, $p < .001$) and verbal aggression ($r = .41$, $p < .001$) scores were high. In addition, participants who reported that their partners involved their children in their conflict (high scores of perceptions of partners' child involvement) had high scores of their own use of stonewalling ($r = .56$, $p < .001$) and verbal aggression ($r = .60$, $p < .001$) strategies. These are moderate to strong associations. Other moderate to strong associations were seen when looking at perceptions of partners' verbal aggression with participants' cooperation ($r = -.35$, $p < .001$, explaining 12% of the variance),

stonewalling ($r = .59$, $p < .001$, explaining 35% of the variance) and verbal aggression ($r = .74$, $p < .001$, explaining 55% of the variance). Therefore, when participants reported high scores of their partners' using negative conflict strategies, they also reported high scores of their own use of negative conflict strategies. See Table 10 for correlations among participants' and participants' perceptions of their partners' conflict strategies.

Research Question 4: How Do the Marital Conflict Dimensions Relate to the Marital Conflict Strategies?

Relationships were found between the conflict dimensions and conflict strategies that were used during conflicts. That is, frequency/severity of conflicts, perceived seriousness of problems (degree of problem), and number of times conflicts were resolved (conflict efficacy) were all statistically associated in one way or another with both the single positive and the several negative conflict strategies. For example, frequency/severity and degree of problem scores were high when participants' stonewalling ($r = .41$, $p < .001$; $r = .45$, $p < .001$, respectively) and verbal aggression ($r = .40$, $p < .001$; $r = .53$, $p < .001$, respectively) scores were high and perception of partners' use of verbal aggression ($r = .52$, $p < .001$; $r = .58$, $p < .001$, respectively) and child involvement ($r = .51$, $p < .001$; $r = .62$, $p < .001$, respectively) scores were high. When those same conflict strategies associated with conflict efficacy are examined, the opposite relationship is evident. That is, conflict efficacy scores were high when scores on those conflict strategies were low. See Table 11 for correlations among conflict dimensions and conflict strategies. Finally, participants' and perception of partners' cooperation scores

Table 10

Correlations of Participant Conflict Strategies and Perception of Partner Conflict Strategies

Variable	Partner cooperation	Partner avoidance	Partner verbal aggression	Partner physical aggression	Partner child involvement
Participant					
Cooperation	.530***	.045	-.352***	-.289**	-.139
Stonewalling	-.297**	.416***	.589***	.194	.562***
Verbal aggress.	-.363***	.408***	.740***	.464***	.603***

Note. $n = 79$. Participant avoidance, physical aggression, and child involvement scales, and partner stonewalling scale were not included due to low reliability scores;

**$p < .01$ two-tailed, ***$p < .001$ two-tailed

were high when conflict efficacy ($r = .36$, $p < .001$; $r = .41$, $p < .001$, respectively) scores were high and degree of problem ($r = .22$, $p < .05$; $r = .52$, $p < .001$, respectively) scores were low. However, the relationship between participants' cooperation and degree of problem is weak. Therefore, frequency/severity and perceived seriousness of problems (degree of problems) were associated with participants' use of negative conflict strategies, as well as participants' perceptions of their partners' use of negative conflict strategies. The number of times conflicts were resolved (conflict efficacy) was associated with the positive conflict strategy, cooperation, for participants and for the reports of their partners. Another interesting result was the differences between participants' self report scores on conflict and those of their perceptions of their partners. The correlation between cooperation and frequency/severity were drastically different for participant vs.

Table 11
Correlations of Conflict Dimensions and Conflict Strategies

Variable	Frequency/ severity	Degree of problem	Conflict efficacy
Conflict strategies participant			
Cooperation	-.069	-.224*	.359***
Stonewalling	.412***	.451***	-.355***
Verbal aggression	.401***	.529***	-.483***
Conflict strategies partner			
Cooperation	-.393***	-.515***	.407***
Avoidance	.047	.134	-.075
Verbal aggression	.518***	.583***	-.495***
Physical aggression	.303**	.174	-.137
Child involvement	.506***	.620***	-.266*

Note. $n = 79$. Participant avoidance, physical aggression, and child involvement scales and partner stonewalling scale were not included due to low reliability scores; $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

perception of partner. For participants, there was no statistically significant relationship ($r = -.07$); however, for perception of partner, there was a statistically significant and moderate relationship between partners' use of cooperation and lower scores of frequency/severity ($r = -.40$). In addition, when looking at cooperation, there is a difference between participant and perception of partner scores for degree of problem. Participants' cooperation was statistically significantly associated with lower scores of degree of problem. However, the association was weak ($r = -.22$), while perception of partners' cooperation was statistically significantly and moderately associated with degree of problem ($r = -.52$). Therefore, perception of partners' use of cooperation during conflict was associated with lower scores on frequency/severity of conflicts and

perceived seriousness of the problems that created conflict, but this was not the case for participants' report of their own use of cooperation.

Research Questions 5: How Do the Conflict Dimensions Relate with Marital Satisfaction?

Marital satisfaction was related to frequency and severity of conflicts, how much conflict is a problem in the marriage, and whether conflicts were resolved. That is, frequency/severity of conflicts ($r = .31, p < .01$) and perception of seriousness of conflicts (degree of problem; $r = .48, p < .001$) scores were low when marital satisfaction scores were high. Also, when the percentages of time that conflicts were resolved (conflict efficacy; $r = .39, p < .001$) scores were high, marital satisfaction scores were high (see Table 12 for correlations among conflict dimensions and marital satisfaction). Therefore, higher marital satisfaction scores were associated with lower scores on frequency/severity and seriousness of marital conflict and with higher scores of conflicts' being resolved more often than not.

Research Question 6: How Does Marital Satisfaction Relate with Marital Conflict Strategies?

Conflict strategies were examined for how they related with marital satisfaction. A relationship was found between marital satisfaction and the positive and negative conflict strategies. We found that participants' and perception of partners' cooperation

Table 12

Correlations of Conflict Dimensions and Marital Satisfaction

Variable	Marital Satisfaction
Frequency/severity	-.305**
Degree of problem	-.467***
Conflict efficacy	.385***

Note. $n = 79$; Conflict efficacy scale $n = 78$. Conflict resolution scale was not included due to low reliability score; $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$

scores were high when marital satisfaction ($r = .29$, $p < .05$) scores were high; however, this is a weak correlation (see Table 13). In addition, marital satisfaction scores were high when participants' stonewalling ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and participants' and perception of partners' verbal aggression ($r = .31$, $p < .01$; $r = .46$, $p < .001$, respectively) scores were low (see Table 13).

Conflict Strategy Scale Items and Marital Satisfaction

Pearson correlations were used to examine relationships between marital satisfaction and the items on the conflict strategies scale. These results were separated by gender to see whether there were differences related to the participant's being male or female. Specifically, do females and males view their own strategies used during conflict differently and is that related to their marital satisfaction? In addition, do females and males view their partners' strategies differently and is that related to marital satisfaction?

Table 13

Correlations of Conflict Strategies and Marital Satisfaction

Variable	Marital Satisfaction
Conflict strategies participant	
Cooperation	.286**
Stonewalling	-.332**
Verbal aggression	-.310**
Conflict strategies partner	
Cooperation	.391***
Avoidance	-.010
Verbal aggression	-.454***
Physical aggression	-.200
Child involvement	-.210

Note. $n = 79$. Participant avoidance, physical aggression, and child involvement scales and partner stonewalling scale were not included due to low reliability scores; $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$

Results for both men and women suggest that if participants perceive their partners as doing any of the following during conflicts: "talk it out with partner," "try to understand what partner is really feeling," "try to find a solution that meets both our needs equally," "compromise, meet partner halfway, split the difference," and/or "accept the blame, apologize," their marital satisfaction scores were higher. These relationships for the men were all statistically significant, with strong associations with r's ranging from .43 to .61 and p values ranging from .05 to .01. The strongest associations for men were "try to find a solution that meets both our needs equally" ($r = .54$, $p < .01$), "compromise, meet partner halfway, split the difference" ($r = .59$, $p < .01$), and "accept the blame, apologize" ($r = .61$, $p < .01$). However, the associations were weaker for

women with r's ranging from .28 to .33. See Table 14 for the correlations of the item analyses of conflict strategies with participants' reports of their own marital satisfaction.

For both men and women, when they perceived their partners as doing any of the following: "complain, bicker without really getting anywhere," "raise voice, yell, shout," "make accusation," and/or "name-calling, cursing, insulting," their marital satisfaction scores were lower. These relationships were all statistically significant and moderately associated with r's ranging from -.35 to -.44 and p's ranging from .05 to .001 except for "raise voice, yell, shout," which was a weak association for women at $r = -.30$ with $p < .05$.

The results for men showed that in addition to relationships reported for the whole sample, when they perceived their partners as behaving in the categories of "express thoughts and feelings openly" ($r = .43, p < .05$), "cry[ing] " ($r = .58, p < .01$), and/or "try[ing] to smooth things over" ($r = .45, p < .05$), their marital satisfaction scores were higher. These relationships were moderately correlated, especially crying at $r = .58$, which explains 34% of the variance. Another tactic that had an especially strong relationship with higher marital satisfaction scores was when men viewed themselves as "compromise[ing], meet[ing] partner[s] halfway, split[ting] the difference" ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). However, when men viewed themselves as "threaten[ing] to end relationship," "argu[ing] in front of the child(ren)," and "try[ing] to ignore problem, avoid[ing] talking about it," their marital satisfaction scores were lower. The correlation between "threaten[ing] to end relationship" and lower marital satisfaction was notably strong at

Table 14

Item Analysis of Correlations Between Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Strategies

	Participants' marital satisfaction	
Variable	Men	Women
Cooperation		
1. Talk it out with partner.		
Perception of self	.281	.216
Perception of partner	.450*	.313*
2. Express thoughts and feelings openly.		
Perception of self	.061	.237
Perception of partner	.425*	.220
3. Listen to partner's point of view.		
Perception of self	.178	.101
Perception of partner	.384	.359**
4. Try to understand what partner is really feeling.		
Perception of self	.471*	.317
Perception of partner	.430*	.315*
5. Try to reason with partner.		
Perception of self	.075	.111
Perception of partner	.259	.098
6. Try to find a solution that meets both our needs equally.		
Perception of self	.349	.195
Perception of partner	.535**	.327*
Stonewalling		
7. Seek intervention from a counselor or friend.		
Perception of self	.069	.195
Perception of partner	-.133	-.074

(table continues)

Variable	Participants' marital satisfaction	
	Men	Women
18. Cry.	-.131	-.079
Perception of self		
Perception of partner	.575**	.067
19. Sulk, refuse to talk, give the "silent treatment."		
Perception of self	-.107	-.196
Perception of partner	-.186	-.020
20. Complain, bicker without really getting anywhere.		
Perception of self	.090	-.301*
Perception of partner	-.425*	-.352**
21. Enlist friends or family to support own point of view.		
Perception of self	.009	-.072
Perception of partner	-.094	.040
33. Threaten to end relationship.		
Perception of self	-.616***	-.278*
Perception of partner	-.242	-.248
34. Withdraw love or affection.		
Perception of self	-.081	-.369**
Perception of partner	-.212	-.314*
Avoidance		
8. Compromise, meet partner halfway, "split the difference."		
Perception of self	.428*	-.010
Perception of partner	.593**	.281*
9. Try to smooth things over.		
Perception of self	.142	.078
Perception of partner	.448*	.195

(table continues)

Variable	Participants' marital satisfaction	
	Men	Women
10. Give in to partner's point of view to escape argument.		
Perception of self	.237	-.302
Perception of partner		
11. Accept the blame, apologize.		
Perception of self	.270	.029
Perception of partner	.607**	.287*
12. "Put up with," humor, indulge partner.		
Perception of self	.094	-.191
Perception of partner	.153	-.143
13. Try to ignore problem, avoid talking about it.		
Perception of self	-.399	-.230
Perception of partner	-.020	-.160
14. Change the subject.		
Perception of self	-.074	-.232
Perception of partner	.178	-.190
15. Clam up, hold in feelings.		
Perception of self	.192	-.082
Perception of partner	-.049	-.207
16. Leave the room.		
Perception of self	-.330	-.006
Perception of partner	.067	-.306*
17. Storm out of the house.		
Perception of self	-.223	-.229
Perception of partner	-.098	-.334**

(table continues)

Variable	Participants' marital satisfaction	
	Men	Women
Child Involvement		
22. Become angry with child when really angry with partner.		
Perception of self	.003	-.140
Perception of partner	-.206	-.308*
23. Argue in front of the child(ren).		
Perception of self	-.419*	-.171
Perception of partner	-.333	-.148
24. Involve the child(ren) in our argument.		
Perception of self	-.293	-.097
Perception of partner	-.255	-.033
45. Argue when the child(ren) might be able to overhear.		
Perception of self	-.074	-.109
Perception of partner	-.074	-.169
46. Confide in child(ren) about problems with partner.		
Perception of self	-.362	-.248
Perception of partner	-.362	-.076
Verbal Aggression		
25. Insist on own point of view.		
Perception of self	-.369	-.070
Perception of partner	-.374	-.173
26. Try to convince partner of own way of thinking.		
Perception of self	-.310	.081
Perception of partner	.007	-.077

(table continues)

	Participants' marital satisfaction	
Variable	Men	Women
35. Push, pull, shove, grab, handle partner roughly.		
Perception of self	-.068	-.064
Perception of partner	-.298	-.018
36. Slap partner.		
Perception of self	-.525**	
Perception of partner	-.516**	
37. Strike, kick, bite partner.		
Perception of self	-.037	-.162
Perception of partner	-.068	
42. Harm self.		
Perception of self	-.037	.057
Perception of partner	-.037	-.003

Note. $n = 79$; *$p < .05$ two-tailed, **$p < .01$ two-tailed, ***$p < .001$ two-tailed

$r = -.62$, $p < .001$. Finally, when men viewed themselves and their partners as "mak[ing] accusations" and "slap[ping] partner," their marital satisfaction scores were lower. These were moderate relationships with r's ranging from -.43 to -.53 and p's ranging from .05 to .01.

The results for women showed that when they perceived their partners as "listen[ing] to [their] partner's point of view" ($r = .36$, $p < .05$), their marital satisfaction scores were higher. Also, when women perceived their partners as "withdraw[ing] love or affection," "leav[ing] the room," "storm[ing] out of the house," "interrupt[ing]/[doesn't] listen to [her]," "becoming angry with child[ren] when really angry with [her]", "[is] sarcastic," and/or "says or does something to hurt [her] feelings," their marital

satisfaction scores were lower with *r*'s ranging from -.29 to -.33 and *p* values ranging from .05 to .01. Saying or doing something to hurt her feelings was the weakest association at $r = -.28$, $p < .05$. The strongest association was between "interrupt[ing]/[doesn't] listen to [her]" and lower marital satisfaction scores ($r = -.43$, $p < .001$).

When women viewed themselves as "threaten[ing] to end relationship" during conflicts, their marital satisfaction scores were lower; however, this was a weak relationship with $r = .28$, $p < .05$. Finally, if women viewed themselves as "complain[ing], bicker[ing] without really getting anywhere," "withdraw[ing] love or affection," "giv[ing] in to partner's point of view to escape argument," "be[ing] sarcastic," "making accusations," and/or "name-calling, cursing, insulting," their marital satisfaction scores were lower (*r*'s ranging from -.30 to -.37 and *p* values ranging from .05 to .01).

When comparing the scores for participants' view of self with view of partner, there are some interesting results. When men viewed their partners as trying to "talk it out with [him]" ($r = .45$, $p < .05$), "express[ing their] thoughts and feelings openly" ($r = .43$, $p < .05$), "try[ing] to smooth things over" ($r = .45$, $p < .05$), and "accept[ing] the blame [and] apologiz[ing]" ($r = .61$, $p < .01$), their marital satisfaction scores were higher. However, viewing himself as using these tactics was not associated with his marital satisfaction rating. In addition, his "threaten[ing] to end [the] relationship" was strongly associated with lower marital satisfaction scores ($r = .62$, $p < .001$). However, his view of his partner as using this tactic was not related to his marital satisfaction score.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to examine marital conflict and marital satisfaction in relation to the ME parenting styles of EC and ED. In addition, this study aimed to examine demographic information of the participants to examine correlations and confounding factors. It was conjectured that demographic factors may be related to marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and parenting practices. Unfortunately, the instrument used to measure EC and ED was unreliable. It is conjectured that reliability of the MESQ was low possibly due to sample size. In two previous studies conducted by the originator of the instrument (Legace-Seguin, 2001), the sample sizes were significantly larger. In the first study, the sample included 140 mothers. The second study sample consisted of 100 mothers. In both studies the MESQ had good reliability scores. This may be related to the larger sample size.

In addition, it is possible that the instrument is more reliable for females than males because the origination of the instrument was tested on women. In the current study, the MESQ was separated by gender to see whether it was reliable for females. The reliability coefficients were higher for females but still marginal. In addition, the reliability coefficients were higher for females than for males. Specifically, EC scale reliability scores were higher for women and men than the ED scores for both women and men. This may indicate that the EC scale is more reliable than the ED scale. However, the sample included only 55 women and 24 men; therefore, it is difficult to compare the scores for men and women due to the difference in sample size. Also it is possible that with a larger sample of females, the reliability scores for the MESQ may

have increased and possibly been similar to those found by Legace-Seguin. However, due to the low reliability score on the MESQ, this study was unable to answer the research questions related to EC and ED.

Analyses were conducted on data for the other research questions related to the demographics, marital conflict, and marital satisfaction. The information from the study is valuable because it shows continuing support that there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and marital conflict. In addition, it furthers our understanding of this relationship by looking at particular aspects of marital satisfaction and marital conflict rather than global concepts. This relationship has been widely researched in the literature and has been widely supported (Cramer, 2000; Kurdek, 1995; Roberts, 2000; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002).

Summary of Results and Discussion

Demographics

The results of analyses exploring the relationships among demographic variables, marital satisfaction, and marital conflict showed that these variables are related to each other. Relationships were found between some demographics and conflict dimensions and strategies. Age of oldest child was associated with lower scores of frequency/severity of marital conflict. This may be because the couple is having less conflict over childrearing practices as the children get older. Or it may be that these participants have been married longer, have established patterns of fighting, and, therefore, do not view their conflicts as frequent and/or severe. Or it may be that as children get older, these parents spend more time shuffling their children from place to place, have less time with

their spouses, and, therefore, less time to fight. Lastly, it may be that these individuals are in newer marriages (remarried) and still in the honeymoon phase of the relationship. Another finding was that higher income was associated with lower scores on the negative conflict strategies. Individuals with more income may have less stress at home due to not feeling financial constraints.

Conflict Dimensions

The results of this study showed relationships among the different conflict dimensions. That is, when the frequency/severity of conflicts increased, the perceived seriousness of arguments increased as well. On the other hand, when participants reported that their conflicts were resolved more times than not, their perception of their arguments as serious decreased. It makes intuitive sense that as couples fight more often and/or have more serious fights, they would see their arguing as a problem. Also, when frequency/severity increased, reports of conflicts being resolved decreased. It could be that the individual participant felt that they fight with their spouse about the same topics over and over, the arguments escalate, and therefore, they do not feel that their conflicts are resolved.

Conflict Strategies

This study examined conflict strategies that were used by participants when arguing with their spouses. These results suggest that when one uses one negative way of resolving conflict, one is likely to use other negative strategies also. In addition, when one uses the positive way of resolving conflict (cooperation), negative strategies are less

likely to be used. Similar results were found by Holman and Jarvis (2003), who reported that hostile couples tended to score high in negative communication during arguments and low in positive communication, while validating couples tended to score high in positive communication and low in negative communication during marital arguments. It may be that when one uses a negative strategy, the partner responds negatively, which escalates the conflict and therefore the individual uses other negative strategies in response. However, if one uses cooperation, the partner may respond positively thereby decreasing the conflict, which makes it easier to continue using cooperation.

This idea is supported when looking at the conflict strategies reported by the participants of this study in relation to their views of the conflict strategies used by their spouses. Results of analyses suggest that when participants viewed their spouses as involving their children in the conflict that they (participants) were more likely to use one or more of the negative conflict strategies of stonewalling and verbal aggression. In addition, the results suggest that when participants viewed their spouses as using negative conflict strategies, they, themselves were less likely to use positive conflict strategies. Therefore, when one perceived that her or his partner was not cooperating during arguments and instead was using either avoidance, verbal aggression, or physical aggression to resolve the conflict, they, themselves, were less likely to try to cooperate and were more likely to use one of the negative conflict strategies. Similarly, when participants used one negative strategy, they were more likely to see their spouses as not cooperating.

Conflict Strategies and Conflict Dimensions

Relationships among frequency/severity of conflict, time conflicts were resolved, and conflict strategies used were also found. As the frequency/severity and perception of arguments as serious increased, so did the reports of using the negative conflict strategies, such as avoidance, stonewalling, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and involving their children. Also, it was shown that when the use of cooperation increased, the reports of frequency/severity reports and perceived seriousness of problems decreased and how often conflicts were resolved increased. When the negative conflict strategies were used, how often conflicts were resolved decreased. Therefore, one's perception of the overall seriousness of their conflict tended to decrease if one viewed themselves and their partners strategies for resolving the conflict as positive and vice versa.

Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Dimensions

This study also examined relationships between marital satisfaction and the conflict dimensions and strategies as well as marital conflict and the same variables. The results suggest that marital satisfaction was higher when participants rated the frequency/severity of conflict and the perceived seriousness of the arguments as low and vice versa. Finally, marital satisfaction was higher when participants felt that their arguments were resolved more times than not. These results have been supported in the literature (Cramer, 2000; Kurdek, 1995; Roberts, 2000; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). For example, Cramer found that frequency of conflicts and whether conflicts were left unresolved was related to lower marital satisfaction. That is, if one felt that her or his

arguments were infrequent, not very serious, dealt with appropriately, and were resolved, she or he tended to be more satisfied with the marriage and vice versa.

Marital Satisfaction and Conflict Strategies

Marital satisfaction was higher when the positive conflict resolution style of cooperation was used. Marital satisfaction was higher when the negative conflict strategies scores were lower and vice versa. In addition, a correlational analysis was conducted between marital satisfaction scores on the KMSS and an item on the CPS that measured satisfaction with conflict strategies used during conflict ($r = .61, p < .001$). The CPS question was, "How satisfied are you with the strategies that you have for resolving your conflicts." Responses were reported on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very satisfied to 5 = extremely dissatisfied. Results showed that marital satisfaction scores were high when scores on this question were high. Therefore, when participants were satisfied with conflict strategies, they were more satisfied in their marriages. These findings that marital conflict is related to marital satisfaction have been widely researched in the literature and widely supported (Cramer, 2000; Kurdek, 1995; Roberts, 2000; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002).

Implications for Family Therapy

The results of this study add to the literature by calling into question the reliability and thus the validity of the MESQ. This research also adds to the literature by supporting the widely studied hypothesis that there is a relationship between marital satisfaction and marital conflict. The results suggest that how couples fight affects their levels of

satisfaction in their marriages and/or vice versa. This has been a hypothesis that many marriage and family therapists have subscribed to when doing couples therapy. Family therapy is based on a systemic perspective, which views the family as a system of interconnected parts. Parts in a system are recursive in their interactions; that is, each part is influential on all other parts of the system, as well as influenced by those other parts. Therefore, system theorists believe that a change in one part of the system will reverberate to the other parts of the system (Becvar & Becvar, 1999). Therefore, changes in marital satisfaction may affect marital conflict and vice versa. One can chose different places in the system to intervene. There may be other aspects of marital satisfaction that could be addressed besides conflict that would enhance marital satisfaction and reduce negative conflict, thereby further enhancing marital satisfaction.

With a connection between marital conflict and marital satisfaction being found and supported in the literature and in this study, couples therapy may be more effective by incorporating ways to improve the couples' conflict and ways of resolving conflict in treatment in order to increase their satisfaction in their relationship. Similarly, using other strategies to increase marital satisfaction may increase positive conflict strategies and more positive conflict resolution. For example, coaching clients to use cooperation as a strategy to resolve conflict and to decrease or eliminate use of avoidance, stonewalling, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and involving their children may increase their marital satisfaction. That is, coaching clients to talk to their partner, express thoughts and feelings openly, listen to each other, empathize with their partner, and find a solution that meets both partners needs may increase their marital satisfaction.

On the other hand, if the therapist encourages clients to use these tactics of communication in the therapy session, the couple may be able to communicate better what they think is contributing to the frequency/severity of conflict and how often conflicts are resolved. Addressing these issues may contribute to the clients' using cooperation during conflict outside of therapy and may reduce their marital conflict and increase their marital satisfaction.

Implications for Future Research

Future research should further use the MESQ to examine its validity and reliability. However, studies should include larger and more diverse samples. A larger sample is needed to be able to test for factor loadings appropriately. In addition, a more diverse sample might reduce bias related to cultural pressures related to parenting and marital satisfaction. Future research could work to develop a better instrument for ME parenting styles. Results of future research would be stronger if the ME instrument measured all four of Gottman's ME parenting types (Gottman et al., 1997), not just EC and ED. Hopefully, with a more diverse sample and a valid and reliable instrument, the research questions from this study can be addressed. That is, the differences between the four ME parenting types with regard to marital satisfaction and marital conflict could be examined.

In addition, further research is needed to test ME and its relationship to marital conflict, marital satisfaction, and child outcomes. Research is needed to explore whether Gottman and colleagues' (1997) claims are valid. Is EC related to better child outcomes?

Do parents who engage in EC parenting have lower marital conflict and higher marital satisfaction? Does EC really buffer children from marital conflict?

Future research could also explore how much child outcomes are related to marital conflict. For instance, how are child outcomes related to particular conflict strategies and the other conflict dimensions explored in this study (frequency/severity, how often conflicts are resolved, positive outcomes from conflict, and perceived seriousness of conflict).

Limitations

Unfortunately, the MESQ did not show adequate reliability for EC ($\alpha = .65$) and ED ($\alpha = .63$), which was different than the coefficients of .92 for EC and .90 for ED reported by Legace-Seguin (2001). A factor analysis conducted on data from this study indicated four factor loadings, unlike the two reported by Legace-Seguin. Therefore, the MESQ was found to be unreliable and called into question the validity of the measure. Sample size may have affected the results found in this study for the MESQ. Data from more participants would have provided more statistical power and analyses might then have shown more clear similarity to Legace-Seguin's results. However, if MESQ is not valid, another pen and pencil instrument needs to be developed that measures the ME parenting styles. Pen and pencil instruments are helpful in keeping the costs of research reasonable and therefore, the study sample may be more representative than those willing to be video recorded.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of diversity in the sample. Seventy-six percent of the sample were members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). It was hypothesized that the high number of participants who were LDS may have influenced the results for marital satisfaction. The LDS culture in Utah advocates strongly for their members to have strong, healthy, and happy marriages, and happy and healthy children. This cultural belief may have affected social desirability for these participants, which may have then skewed the results for marital satisfaction and for their reports on their interactions with their children. This may have contributed to the MESQ scores' lack of reliability. However, *t* tests showed that this was not the case for religion and marital satisfaction. There were no differences between LDS participants and all other religions for marital satisfaction $t(76) = -1.52, p < 13$. A puzzling finding was that when marital satisfaction as measured by the KMSS was correlated with a question from the CPS that measures happiness in the marriage, they were found not to be related ($r = .06, p < .58$). The question from the CPS was, "Overall, how happy are you with this relationship?" This question is very similar to a question on the KMSS: "How satisfied are you with your relationship with your husband or wife?" It is puzzling why these two were not statistically significantly correlated. It may be that the order of the measures and or questions made a difference. That is, participants filled out the KMSS first and then the CPS. The question on how happy they are in their relationship is the last question of the CPS and therefore comes after answers to many questions about marital conflict. Did participants feel differently about their relationship after answering 83 questions about how they fight with their spouses?

This study had a high number of participants who reported high marital satisfaction scores. Crane et al. (2000) have established that a score of 17 or higher "indicates that the individual or couple is nondistressed, while a score of 16 or lower indicates some degree of marital distress" (p. 58). The total score for the KMSS is the sum of the scores and ranges from 3 to 21. Scores in this study show that out of the 79 participants, 65 (82%) reported a score of 17 or higher on the KMSS, which is the cut off indicating high marital satisfaction. Only 14 out of the 79 (18%) reported a score of 16 or lower, which indicates low marital satisfaction. It may be that people with high marital satisfaction were the ones volunteering to be part of a study in which their marital satisfaction would be measured and those with distressed marriages did not volunteer to be part of the study. Therefore, there may have been a sampling bias due to the participants' being self-selected to participate.

Conclusions

Even though this research did not empirically support claims about the ME relationship with marital satisfaction and marital conflict, it did support the relationship between marital satisfaction and marital conflict. Further research is needed to understand how ME is related to marital satisfaction and marital conflict. In addition, future research needs to explore how ME parenting is related to child outcomes. That is, does ME parenting buffer children against the negative effects of marital conflict on children as Gottman et al. (1997) suggested?

The current research findings are important to family therapy due to the relationship between marital conflict and marital satisfaction. Therefore, this research shows that when doing couples therapy, the therapist needs to address the couple's marital conflict in order to increase the couple's satisfaction with their marriage and address other aspects of marital satisfaction to reduce negative conflict. This research also contributes to marriage and family therapy by breaking marital conflict into different dimensions and exploring the different aspects of conflict. So, the therapist needs to assess the frequency/severity of conflicts, conflict strategies, and rates of conflict resolution. If therapists assess the different areas of conflict, interventions can be defined to intervene more appropriately.

Results indicate that these different aspects – strategies used to resolve conflict, whether conflicts are resolved, positive outcomes from conflict, frequency/severity of conflict, and seriousness of conflict – are related to marital satisfaction. In addition, since marital satisfaction is correlated with these other variables, it is possible that improving marital satisfaction will help with these areas as well as the other way around. It may be that intervening in some other area of marital interaction that affects satisfaction will improve couples' ability to handle conflict better, thus further improving marital satisfaction, and so on. Intervening in the conflict dynamics may not be the only area to begin. For example, in solution-focused therapy (De Jong & Berg, 2001), the therapist might begin by helping the couple focus on aspects of the marriage that are going well. After this softening, more direct intervention in conflict might be better received. Similarly, an emotion focused (Johnson & Denton, 1991) therapist might help couples

understand the hurt and fear of rejection behind withdrawal or stonewalling. Other examples would be a behavioral therapist's (Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1991) helping couples begin to be clear about their own thoughts and feelings and take responsibility for those rather than blaming or using other negative strategies. A structural therapist (Colapinto, 1991) might help them use different strategies to break the cycle that is not working for them. Therefore, therapists need to assess and intervene in aspects of marital conflict and/or aspects of marital satisfaction in order to adequately address couple dynamics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

All Forms Given to Participants

1
Date Created: January 26, 2005

Informed Consent
Relationships Between Marital Satisfaction, Marital Conflict, and Parental Emotional Style

Introduction/Purpose
We would like to ask you to participate in our study on the relationships between marital satisfaction, marital conflict, and parenting. This study involves research and is being conducted by researchers at Utah State University. You have been asked to participate because you are currently married with at least one child between 3 and 18 years of age. We want find out more about how marital satisfaction and the way that couples resolve conflict affect parenting styles.

Procedures
If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about how satisfied you are with your marriage, how frequently you fight with your spouse, what you fight over, how you resolve conflict with your spouse, and how you interact with your children about their emotions. We ask that you fill out four questionnaires, which are enclosed in this packet, and return via mail (postage pre-paid). It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the packet. If you are student at Utah State University you may receive extra credit for a class for participating in this research if the professor offered it. If you wish not to participate in this research your professor will provide you with an alternative activity for the extra credit.

New Findings
During the course of this study, you will be informed of any significant new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research, or new alternatives to participation that might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is obtained that is relevant or useful to you, or if the procedures and/or methods change at any time throughout this study, your consent to continue participating in this study will be obtained again.

Risks (reasonably to be expected)
There may be some discomfort with some questions. Otherwise there are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

Benefits (reasonably to be expected)
We hope that this study will help us understand better how marital satisfaction and marital conflict interact with parents ability to teach their children about emotions.

Explanation and Offer to Answer Questions
If you have any questions about this study you can contact Jennifer Hogge at 801-501-7491. You can also call Professor Thorana Nelson at (435) 797-7431. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or if there is something you do

Date Created: January 26, 2005

Informed Consent

Relationships Between Marital Satisfaction, Marital Conflict, and Parental Emotional Style

not feel you can discuss with Jennifer Hogge or Dr. Nelson, please contact the Institutional Review Board of Utah State University at (435) 797-1180.

Costs

There will be no cost to you and you will not be paid any money for participating in this study.

Voluntary participation and right to leave study

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality

Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations and will not be given to anyone else who is not a part of our research team unless you give your written permission. Your identity will be safe because your name will not appear on any of the questionnaires. We will give each set of questionnaires a special number in order to keep your data together as a set. After we receive your questionnaire, your name will be crossed off our list of potential participants. The list will be destroyed after we have received all data. Informed Consent forms will be kept separate from the questionnaires so that we cannot connect your name with your questionnaires. When we write reports about this research, we will never tell who was in the study and we will only report what happened to everyone altogether.

IRB Approval Statement

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human participants at USU has reviewed and approved this research study.

Copy of consent

You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement

I certify that the information contained in this form is correct and that we have provided trained staff to explain the nature and purpose, possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this study and to answer questions that may arise.

(Signature of PI)
Dr. Thorana Nelson
Principal Investigator
(435) 797-7431

(Signature of student)
Jennifer Hogge
Student Researcher
(801) 501-7491

Signature of Subject(s)
By signing below, I agree to participate.

Subjects Signature

Date

Relationships Between Marital Satisfaction, Marital Conflict, and Parental Emotional Style
Demographic Questionnaire

Age: _____
Gender: Male _____ Female _____
Occupation: _____
Are you currently a student: Y/N
Number of children: _____
Age of oldest child: _____
Have you ever taken a parenting class: Y/N

Length of Current Marriage: _____ years

Type of Family: Two Parent: _____
Blended: _____
Single Parent: _____

Level of Education in years: _____

Race: Caucasian: _____
Asian: _____
African American: _____
Latino: _____
Other: _____

Religion: Roman Catholic: _____
Protestant: _____
LDS: _____
Jewish: _____
Muslim: _____
Other: _____

Income:

$0.00-$15,000	_____	$65,000-$74,999	_____
$15,000-$24,999	_____	$75,000-$99,000	_____
$25,000-$34,999	_____	$100,000-$200,000	_____
$35,000-$44,999	_____	Above $200,000	_____
$45,000-$54,999	_____		
$55,000-$64,999	_____		

Couple Conflicts and Problem-Solving Strategies
Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your current marriage and spouse. Please circle one of the seven numbered responses for each question.

How satisfied are you with your marriage?

1 Extremely dissatisfied
2 Very dissatisfied
3 Somewhat dissatisfied
4 Mixed
5 Somewhat satisfied
6 Very satisfied
7 Extremely satisfied

How satisfied are you with your wife or husband as a spouse?

1 Extremely dissatisfied
2 Very dissatisfied
3 Somewhat dissatisfied
4 Mixed
5 Somewhat satisfied
6 Very satisfied
7 Extremely satisfied

How satisfied are you with your relationship?

1 Extremely dissatisfied
2 Very dissatisfied
3 Somewhat dissatisfied
4 Mixed
5 Somewhat satisfied
6 Very satisfied
7 Extremely satisfied

All couples have conflicts from time to time, and there are many ways that partners can try to handle disagreements when they arise. Please tell us about yours **DURING THE LAST YEAR.**

1. How often do you and your partner have ***minor*** disagreements (e.g. "spats", getting on each other's nerves)? Please place a check mark (✓) inside the box that corresponds to what is true for you.

- ☐ once a year or less
- ☐ every 4 - 6 months
- ☐ every 2 - 3 months
- ☐ once or twice a month
- ☐ once or twice a week
- ☐ just about every day

2. How often do you and your partner have ***major*** disagreements (e.g. big fights, "blow-ups")?

- ☐ once a year or less
- ☐ every 4 - 6 months
- ☐ every 2 - 3 months
- ☐ once or twice a month
- ☐ once or twice a week
- ☐ just about every day

Left side: For each issue, please rate how much of a problem it is currently in your relationship on a scale ranging from: **0 (no problem at all)** to **100 (a severe problem):**

Right side: For each problem, please rate how often you resolve disagreements to your mutual satisfaction from **0 (never)** to **100% (always).** If it is no problem at all, leave this column blank

Degree of problem 0 – 100			**% of time resolved 0 – 100%**
	1.	Childrearing/issues concerning child(ren)	%
	2.	Career decisions	%
	3.	Balancing demands of work and homelife	%
	4.	Household tasks, who does what around house	%
	5.	Money, handling family finances	%
	6.	Recreation, leisure time activities	%
	7.	Relationships with in-laws	%
	8.	Relationships with friends	%
	9.	Jealousy/mistrust/extramarital affairs	%
	10.	Our sexual relationship	%
	11.	Communication between us	%
	12.	Demonstrating affection, intimacy, closeness	%
	13.	Amount of time spent together	%
	14.	Alcohol and/or drug use	%
	15.	Conduct (right, good, or proper behavior)	%
	16.	Aims, goals, values, philosophy of life	%
	17.	Religion	%
	18.	How we make decisions, who "calls the shots", who is going to be the "boss"	%
	19.	Personality clashes or differences (e.g. feeling the other is moody, overly critical, or hard to get along with)	%
	20.	Differences of opinion regarding egalitarian versus traditional sex roles	%
	21.	Others: (specify)_____	%

please continue on the next page

What strategies do you and your partner use when you have disagreements with each other?
Using the four point scale below, show how often **YOU** use each strategy on the left side and how often **YOUR PARTNER** uses each strategy on the right side.
Remember: the first response that comes to mind is probably the best one.

0 Never 1 Rarely 2 Sometimes 3 Often

Me					My Partner			
never	rarely	sometimes	often		never	rarely	sometimes	often
0	1	2	3	1. Talk it out with partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	2. Express thoughts and feelings openly	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	3. Try to understand what partner is really feeling	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	4. Try to reason with partner.	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	5. Try to find a solution that meets both of our needs equally	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	6. Seek intervention from a counselor or friend	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	7. Compromise, meet partner half way, "split the difference"	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	8. Try to smooth things over	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	9. Give in to partner's viewpoint to escape argument	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	10. Accept the blame, apologize	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	11. "Put up with", humor, indulge partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	12. Try to ignore problem, avoid talking about it	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	13. Change the subject	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	14. Clam up, hold in feelings	0	1	2	3

please continue on the next page

0 1 2 3

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

Me					My Partner			
0	1	2	3	15. Clam up, hold in feelings	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	16. Leave the room	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	17. Storm out of the house	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	18. Cry	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	19. Sulk, refuse to talk, give the "silent treatment"	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	20. Complain, bicker without really getting anywhere	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	21. Enlist friends or family to support own point of view	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	22. Become angry with child when really angry with partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	45. Argue in front of the child(ren)	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	46. Confide in child(ren) about problems with partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	25. Insist on own point of view	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	26. Try to convince partner of own way of thinking	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	27. Raise voice, yell, shout	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	28. Interrupt/don't listen to partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	29. Be sarcastic	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	30. Make accusations	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	31. Name-calling, cursing, insulting	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	32. Say or do something to hurt partner's feelings	0	1	2	3

please continue on the next page

0 1 2 3

Never Rarely Sometimes Often

Me					My Partner			
0	1	2	3	33. Threaten to end relationship	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	34. Withdraw love or affection	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	35. Throw objects, slam doors, break things	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	36. Throw something at partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	37. Threaten to hurt partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	38. Push, pull, shove, grab, handle partner roughly	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	39. Slap partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	40. Strike, kick, bite partner	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	41. Beat partner severely	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	42. Harm self	0	1	2	3
0	1	2	3	43. Others: (specify) _____ _____	0	1	2	3

Please continue on next page

For each statement, please circle the rating that best describes the **outcomes** of your disagreements:

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually
1. We feel that we've resolved it, or come to an understanding	0	1	2	3
2. We feel closer to one another than before the fight	0	1	2	3
3. We have fun making up with one another	0	1	2	3
4. We don't resolve the issue, but "agree to disagree"	0	1	2	3
5. We each give in a little bit to the other	0	1	2	3
6. We feel worse about one another than before the fight	0	1	2	3
7. We feel like talking about it was a big waste of time	0	1	2	3
8. We don't resolve the issue; we continue to hold grudges	0	1	2	3
9. We end up feeling angry and annoyed with one another	0	1	2	3
10. The whole family ends up feeling upset	0	1	2	3
11. We stay mad at one another for a long time	0	1	2	3
12. We don't speak to one another for a while	0	1	2	3
13. We break up with each other for a time	0	1	2	3

14. How satisfied are you with the strategies that you have for resolving your conflicts?

☐ very satisfied ☐ works OK most of the time ☐ works sometimes but could be better ☐ mostly dissatisfied ☐ extremely dissatisfied

15. Overall, how happy are you with this relationship?

☐ extremely unhappy ☐ fairly unhappy ☐ a little unhappy ☐ a little happy ☐ fairly happy ☐ extremely happy ☐ perfect

The Maternal Emotional Style Questionnaire
Lagacé-Séguin and Coplan

On this page you will see statements that describe feelings in yourself and your child. We would like to know your opinions about each of these statements. For each statement please decide to what extent you agree or disagree and circle your choice. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers. And please use the following scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements:

1 2 3 4 5

strongly disagree **disagree** **neutral** **agree** **strongly agree**

1	When my child is sad, it's time to problem solve	1	2	3	4	5
2	Anger is an emotion worth exploring	1	2	3	4	5
3	When my child is sad I am expected to fix the world and make it perfect	1	2	3	4	5
4	When my child gets sad, it's a time to get close	1	2	3	4	5
5	Sadness is something that one has to get over, to ride out, not to dwell on	1	2	3	4	5
6	I prefer my child to be happy rather than overly emotional	1	2	3	4	5
7	I help my child get over sadness quickly so he/she can move on to other things	1	2	3	4	5
8	When my child is angry, it's an opportunity for getting close	1	2	3	4	5
9	When my child is angry, I take some time to try to experience this feeling with him/her	1	2	3	4	5
10	I try to change my child's angry moods into cheerful ones	1	2	3	4	5
11	Childhood is a happy-go-lucky time, not a time for feeling sad or angry	1	2	3	4	5
12	When my child gets angry, my goal is to get him or her to stop	1	2	3	4	5
13	When my child is angry, I want to know what he/she is thinking	1	2	3	4	5
14	When my child is angry, it's time to solve a problem	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Advertisements and Flyers

Internet Advertisement

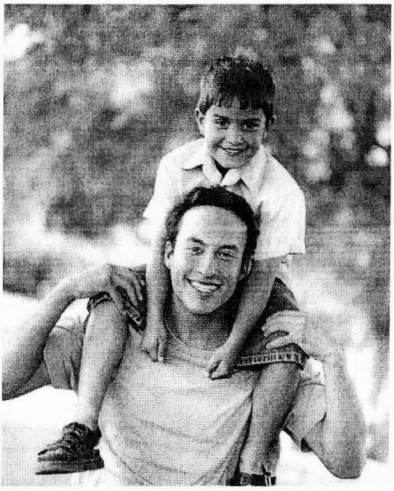
Are you married with children?

Jennifer Hogge and Dr. Thorana Nelson are seeking volunteers for a research study on how marital satisfaction and marital conflict affects parenting children about emotions. Participants must be married with at least one child between the ages of 3 and 18. Participation requires 20 minutes of your time to fill out four questionnaires that you receive by mail or can fill out online. If you are interested, please contact Jennifer Hogge at 801-501-7491or see link below to begin.

Flyer A

Are You Married With Children?

Jennifer Hogge and Dr. Thorana Nelson are seeking volunteers for a research study on how marital satisfaction and marital conflict affect parenting children about emotions.



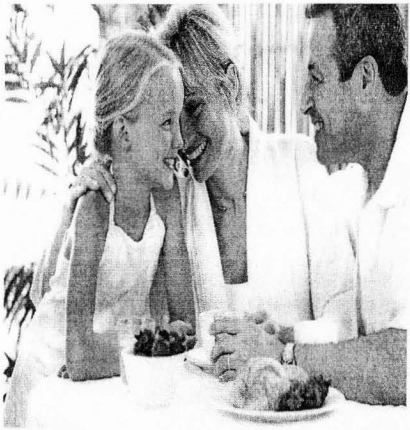
- Participants must be currently married with at least one child between 3-11 yrs of age.
- Participation requires 20 mins of your time to fill out four questionnaires that you receive by mail.

If you are interested, please contact Jennifer Hogge at 801-501-7491 or **mftresearch@yahoo.com**

Flyer B

Are You Married With Children?

Jennifer Hogge and Dr. Thorana Nelson are seeking volunteers for a research study on how marital satisfaction and marital conflict affect parenting children about emotions.



- Participants must be currently married with at least one child 3-11 yrs of age.
- Participation requires 20 mins of your time to fill out four questionnaires that you receive by mail.

If you are interested, please contact Jennifer Hogge at 801-501-7491 or mftresearch@yahoo.com

Appendix C

Table of Instruments in Literature Review

Table 15

Statistics of Instruments Reported in Literature Review

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Adult Attachment Scale	AAS	Collins & Read (1990)	Marchand (2004)	Closeness subscale $\alpha = .82$ husbands and $\alpha = .77$ wives; Dependency subscale $\alpha = .76$ husbands and $\alpha = .79$ wives; Anxiety subscale $\alpha = .84$ husbands and wives.
Alternative Solutions Test		Caplan, Weissberg, Bersoff, Ezekoqitz, & Wells (1988)	Goodman, Barfoot, Frye, & Belli (1999)	No psychometrics reported
Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale	CES-D	Radloff (1977)	Marchand (2004)	$\alpha = .92$ husbands and $\alpha = .89$ wives
Child Behavior Checklist	CBCL		Katz & Gottman (1993); Harrist & Ainslie(1998); Crockenberg &Langrock (2001); El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson(2001)	No psychometrics reported

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Child Conflict Interview	CINT	Stein & Levine (1989)	Crockenberg & Langrock (2001)	No psychometrics reported
Child Depression Inventory	CDI	Kovacs (1985)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	$\alpha = .76$
Children's Adaptive Behavior Inventory	CABI	Cowan & Cowan (1990)	Katz & Gottman (1993)	$\alpha = .81$, range = .66 to .90
Children's Exposure/Reactions to Marital Disagreements		Jouriles et al. (1991)	Kitzmann (2000)	$\alpha = .86$ for mothers and $\alpha = .93$ fathers
Children's Perceptions of Interparental Conflict Scale	CPIC	Grych, Seid, & Fincham (1992)	Stocker & Youngblade (1999); Goodman, Barfoot, Frye, & Belli, (1999)	α's ranging from .79 to .92
Conflict and Problem Solving Scale	CPS	Kerig (1996)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	No psychometrics reported

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Conflict Resolution Behavior Questionnaire	CRBQ	Rubenstein & Feldman (1993)	Marchand (2004)	Attacking subscale $\alpha = .83$ husbands and $\alpha = .68$ wives; Compromising subscale $\alpha = .73$ husbands and $\alpha = .71$ wives
Conflict Resolution Style		Schneedwind & Gerhard (2002)	Schneedwind & Gerhard (2002)	Positive Conflict Resolution $\alpha = .82$;
Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory	CRSI	Kurdek (1994)	Kurdek (1995)	Dysfunctional $\alpha = .65$ to .89 for self and $\alpha = .80$ to .91 for partner
Conflict Scale		Cramer (2000)	Cramer (2000)	Negative Conflict subscale $\alpha = .85$ and Unresolved conflict subscale $\alpha = .90$
Conflict Tactics Scale	CTS	Straus (1979)	Goodman, Barfoot, Frye, & Beili (1999)	α's ranging from .51 to .63
Cornell Medical Index	CMI	Brodman, Erdmann, & Wolff (1960)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	α's ranging from .60 to .91

(*table continues*)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Cowan and Cowan Coding System		Cowan & Cowan (1982)	Gottman et al. (1997)	Interrater reliability $r = .64$
Demand for Approval Scale of the Irrational Beliefs Test		Jones (1969)	Cramer (2003)	$\alpha = .65$
Differences of Opinion Scale		Cramer (2002)	Cramer (2003)	$\alpha = .85$; -.49 correlation with the Relationship Assessment Scale
Domestic Conflict Inventory		Margolin, Burman, John, & O'Brien (1990)	Gordis, Margolin, & John (1997)	No psychometrics reported
Dyadic Adjustment Scale	DAS	Spainer (1976)	Harrist & Ainslie (1998)	Consensus scale $\alpha = .84$ No psychometrics reported
EAS Temperament Survey for Children		Buss & Plomin (1984)	Katz & Gottman (1993)	

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Family Emotional Expressiveness Questionnaire	FEEQ	Greenberg, Kusche, & Cook (1991)	Stocker & Youngblade (1999)	α's ranging from .79 to .92
Family Expressiveness Questionnaire	FEQ	Halberstadt (1986)	Cassidy, Parke, Butkovsky, & Braungart (1992)	$\alpha < .92$
Family-level and Co-parenting Interaction Coding System	FICS	Katz, Low, Young, & Kahm (1997)	Katz & Woodin (2002)	Interrater reliability correlations ranged from .55 to .85
Forbidden Toy Coding System	FTCS	Mittmann & Katz (1997)	Katz & Woodin (2002)	No psychometrics reported
Interaction Response Patterns Questionnaire	IRPQ	Roberts (2000)	Roberts (2000)	The IRPQ scales were compared to the MICS scales of Hostility and Not Tracking to test validity

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Marital Adjustment Test	MAT	Locke & Wallace (1959)	Roberts (2000); Kitzmann (2000)	No psychometrics reported
Marital Comparison Level Inventory	MCI	Sabatelli (1984)	Marchand (2004)	$\alpha = .96$ for husbands $\alpha = .97$ for wives
Marital Conflict Questionnaire	MCQ	Rands, Levinger Mellinger (1981)	Crockenberg & Langrock (2001)	$\alpha = .70$ for mothers $\alpha = .63$ for fathers
Marital Interaction Coding System	MICS	Weiss & Summers (1983)	Stocker & Youngblade (1999)	Interrater correlations .85 for wives and .60 for husbands
Marital Satisfaction Inventory	MSI	Snyder (1981)	Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler (2001);	Internal consistency scores ranging from .80 to .97, with a mean of .88
			Katz & Gottman (1993)	No psychometrics reported

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
			Lindahl & Malik (1999a, 1999b)	Conflict Over Childrearing subscale α = .86 for English and α = .79 for Spanish; Global Distress Scale subscale α = .93, test-retest correlation of r = .92
ME semi-structured interview		Katz & Gottman (1986)	Gottman et al. (1997)	Interobserver reliabilities ranging from .73 to .86
Normative Beliefs About Aggression Scale		Huesmann & Guerra (1997)	Marcus et al. (2001)	α = .88
O'Leary-Porter Scale	OPS	Porter & O'Leary (1980)	Stocker & Youngblade (1999)	α = .82 for mothers & α = .80 for fathers

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
			El-Sheikh, Harger, and Whitson (2001)	No psychometrics reported
Oral History Interview		Gottman et al. (1997)	Gottman et al. (1997)	Interrater reliability of .75; intercorrelations for individual dimensions ranged between .71 and .91
Parent-child Conflict Interview	PINT	Crockenberg, Jackson, & Langrock (1996)	Crockenberg & Langrok (2001)	Interrater reliability coefficients of .85
Parent-child Interaction Video Coding System	PIVCS	Stocker, Ahmed, & Stall (1995)	Stocker & Youngblade (1999)	α's ranging from .79 to .92
Potential Family Conflict Questionnaire		Margolin (1992)	Gordis, Maargolin, & John (1997)	No psychometrics reported
Rand Corporation Health Insurance Scale	RHS	Eisen, Donald, & Ware (1980)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	α's ranging from .61 to .80

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Rapid Couple Interaction Coding System	RCICS	Krokoff, Gottman, & Hass (1989)	Gottman et al. (1997)	Cohen's kappa score of .71
Relationship Assessment Scale	RAS	Hendrick (1988)	Schneedwind & Gerhard (2002)	$\alpha = .82$
			Cramer (2000)	Correlated .80 with DAS
Relationship Inventory		Barett-Lennard (1964)	Cramer (2003)	$\alpha < .79$
Relationship Personality		Schneedwind & Gerhard (2002)	Schneedwind & Gerhard (2002)	Relationship Competence subscale $\alpha = .90$; Empathy subscale $\alpha = .88$; Vulnerability subscale $\alpha = .79$.
Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale	RCMAS	Reynolds & Richmond (1978)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	$\alpha = .72$

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Revised Conflict Tactics Scale	CTS2	Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman (1995)	Marcus et al. (2001)	$\alpha = .80$ for women & $\alpha = .81$ for men
Self-Esteem Scale		Rosenberg (1965)	Cramer (2003)	$\alpha = .90$ & a 15-week test-retest reliability of .82
Self-perception Profile for Children	SPPC	Harter (1982)	El-Sheikh, Harger, & Whitson (2001)	$\alpha = .62$
Specific Affect Coding System	SPAFF	Gottman, Coan, & McCoy (1996	Katz & Gottman (1993)	Interrater reliability coefficients of .86 to .97
			Katz & Woodin (2002)	No psychometrics reported
			Gottman et al. (1997)	No psychometrics reported

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
Strength Deployment Inventory	SDI	Porter (1997)	Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler (2001)	No psychometrics reported
System for Coding Interactions and Family Functioning	SCIFF	Lindahl & Malik (1991)	Kitzmann (2000)	α's ranging from .82 to .96
			Lindahl & Malik (1999a)	Interrater reliability r = .91 for Cohesiveness; K = .78 and .83 for Formation and Parenting Style
			Lindahl & Malik (1999b)	Interrater reliability of .85 and .87 for Balance of Power and Conflict Management Style; r = .92 for Rejection, r = .80 for Coercion, r = .84 for Emotional Support, r = .77 for Withdrawal

(table continues)

Instrument	Acronym	Citation	Cited In	Statistics
System for Coding Interactions in Dyads	SCID	Malik & Lindahl (1996)	Lindahl & Malik (1999b)	No psychometrics reported
Turning Towards versus Turning Away		Driver & Gottman (2004)	Gottman & Driver (2005)	% of agreement for Bids was 88.29% and for 76.51% for Responses. Cohen's kappa for Bids .88 and .77 for Responses, with *z*-sores of 42.76 and 43.06, respectively. α = averaged .78