RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND STABILITY AMONG LATINOS WITH RESPECT TO COMMUNICATION STYLES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION TYPES

by

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ABSTRACT

Relationship Satisfaction and Stability Among Latinos with Respect to Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types

by

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This secondary analysis employed data from portions of the Spanish and English versions of the RELATionship Evaluation inventory, a self-report questionnaire (RELATE). The present research analyzed conflict resolution types, communication styles, and relationship satisfaction and stability among Latino men and women compared to Caucasian men and women. Multiple linear regression analysis was used for analyzing the data.

Communication styles and conflict resolution types were more different than similar among Latino males and females in predicting relationship satisfaction and relationship stability; however, they were more similar than different among Caucasian males and females. The communication style of love was the only statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction that was common across gender and ethnicity in this
study. Implications for the practice of marriage and family therapy and for research are discussed.

(159 pages)
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Latino population in the United States is growing rapidly. At the same time, research available on marriage and family therapy with Latinos is sparse and does not reflect this growth, lending to the difficulty of cross-cultural work. We need to add to current knowledge on ethnic and otherwise diverse populations in the marriage and family therapy literature, thereby improving cultural competency among marriage and family therapists.

Census Information

In 2000, about 31% of the U.S. population was made up of racial and ethnic minorities (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000) compared to about 25% in 1990 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). The same sources indicate that the Latino population alone increased 54% over the last decade. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000) predictions, by the year 2050, almost half (48.9%) of the U.S. population will be comprised of races and ethnicities other than white. This is due to racial and ethnic groups other than white increasing in proportion: “12% black, almost 25% Latino, almost 9% Asian and Pacific Islanders, and slightly over 1% American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut” (Benokraitis, 2001, p. 2).

Family therapy research that includes ethnic minorities is much lower than the percentages minorities represent in the United States’ population (Bean & Crane, 1996), meaning that ethnic minorities are not appropriately represented in the current literature. Six journals (The American Journal of Family Therapy, Contemporary Family Therapy
(formerly *The International Journal of Family Therapy*), *Families in Society* (formerly *Social Casework*), *Family Process*, *Family Therapy*, and *The Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*) published 2,162 articles between 1984 and 1993 (Bean & Crane). Of the 2,162 articles, only 94 (4.4%) focused on racial, ethnic, or specific minority issues, with Latinos represented in a mere 10 articles (0.46%). As ethnic minority populations continue to grow in the United States, so does the need for a greater understanding of their relationship structures, dynamics, and mental health concerns so that therapists may better serve these populations.

The lack of cultural competence among therapists leads to stereotyping and lack of appropriate interventions that are suited to particular families and their difficulties. Therefore, therapists need to be more aware of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity as it applies to the therapy setting as well as to other aspects of society, including the family. Very little research has been reported on ethnically diverse marriages (Mackey & O’Brien, 1998).

The Latino population is the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. The lack of research on lifestyle factors as well as family structure and functioning greatly impedes any practical efforts to increase cultural sensitivity among therapists (Massey, Zambrana, & Bell, 1995). The exceptional increase in Latino population has resulted in a gap between the needs of the Latino community and mental health service providers’ ability to provide culturally competent services (Smith, 2002).

Marital therapists need to understand this growing population in ways that will help us be more aware of cultural differences in terms of what is viewed as a problem, as
normal, or as a strength in family dynamics, communication, and conflict resolution. This will help us to avoid trying to “fix” problems that are not problems for the Latino family itself and to not dismiss reported difficulties because we do not define them as such (e.g., “disobedience” of children). In other words, Dillard (1983) has suggested we must not ignore value differences and must reduce stereotyping.

There is a great deal of literature on counseling and therapy in the mental health field. However, there is a significant lack of research about the influence of culture and the therapeutic relationship itself (Pike, 2002). D’Andrea and Daniels (1995) suggested that awareness of multicultural issues has slowly shifted the field of mental health from a position of active neglect to reluctant accommodation. There has never been a greater need for research focusing on racial and ethnic minority families and couples (Bean & Crane, 1996).

**Research on Latino Families**

There has been an increase in research focused on ethnic minorities in recent years; however, there still remains a scarcity of information in the professional mental health literature about U.S. racial and ethnic minority groups (Bean & Crane, 1996), particularly research on race and ethnicity and comparisons between Latino and non-Latino populations. Only a limited amount of multicultural marital therapy research is actually being done, according to recent research reviews (Baca Zinn & Wells, 2000; Bean & Crane, 1996; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1995; Reynolds, 1995; Vega, 1990).

There are obstacles associated with research on cultural awareness. One of the
problems in presenting research and promoting increased cultural awareness is describing a cultural group without overgeneralizing (Morales, 1997). Further difficulty in this type of research comes from racial and ethnic groups that have experienced discrimination and prejudice by the mainstream majority culture and the fear that research findings would be used against them (Bean & Crane, 1996). Another hindrance in this type of research is the great difficulty in constructing measures and developing theories that are valid cross-culturally (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991; Sue, Zane, & Young, 1994). The lack of Spanish-translated resources (e.g., validated family and couple measures) is also a factor that has hindered research and clinical endeavors (Massey et al., 1995; Suzuki & Kugler, 1995; Yansen & Shulman, 1996).

Since 1997, research on marital satisfaction among Latinos suggests that Latinos may experience lower marital satisfaction than Asians or Caucasians in traditional marriages (Schammann, 1999). This is a significant area of study because declining marital satisfaction may be a precursor to marital dissolution (Gottman, 1994). Marital stability among Latinos is another area of research that is lacking (Frisbie, Bean, & Eberstein, 1980), and what is available is old and may not currently be applicable (Vega, 1990).

Research that discusses communication styles among Latinos rarely focuses on couple interaction. Rather, it focuses on the process of communication between the therapist and client (e.g., Alers, 1978; Choudhuri, 2001; Dillard, 1983; Fine, 2001; Marcos, Alpert, Urcuyo, & Kesselman, 1973; Pastor, 2002). This lack of information does not improve the competency of therapists toward understanding communication
styles of Latino couples as different from non-Latinos. Research on the topic of conflict resolution styles among Latinos is sparse. What is available suggests that Latinos tend to use an avoidant style of conflict resolution (Falicov, 1998; Gabrielidis, Pearson, Stephan, Villareal, & Ybarra, 1997; Kagan, Knight, & Martinez-Ramero, 1982).

The lack of information on marital satisfaction, marital stability, communication styles, and conflict resolution types relative to Latino couples contributes to cultural incompetence (lack of awareness and understanding of cultural differences and similarities) and to further discrimination. That is, without information to the contrary, therapists are likely to assume that the ideal way of communicating in marriage is like that of mainstream, middle class, white America. Forcing the normative styles on couples in therapy may not increase marital satisfaction and stability and, in fact, may contribute to further dissatisfaction and instability.

Bean and Crane (1996) suggested that the scarcity of journal articles directed toward minority issues and therapy could be taken as a lack of interest, an oversight, or possibly even discrimination. Carbonell (2002) suggested that cultural incompetence is a sign of racism and social injustice from socially oppressive economic and ideological structures. According to Carbonell, cultural incompetence comes from traditional theoretical inflexibility and the political shortsightedness of general psychology. There is a general belief that people, in terms of psychological processes, are more alike than different.
Problem

Marriage and family therapists treat people who are unhappy in marriage. These clients are dissatisfied with their marriages, their marriages are unstable, or both. The research available suggests that communication styles and conflict resolution types are contributors to marriage satisfaction and marital stability (Amatto & Rogers, 1997; Filsinger & Thoma, 1988; Gottman, 1994, 1999; Gottman, Croan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998; Leonard & Roberts, 1998; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). Because marital therapists often focus on communication and conflict resolution, it would be useful to them to know which styles of communication and types of conflict resolution predict greater marital satisfaction and stability and which predict marital dissatisfaction and unstable marriages in Latino couples. With this common focus in marital therapy, it is important for therapists to understand cultural similarities and differences on these factors.

Cultural competence in meeting the needs of Latinos is very weak in the services of traditional psychology, greatly diminishing the quality of services offered to Latinos (Carbonell, 2002). As we continue to make advances in knowledge about racial and ethnic minorities, empirical data and expert opinion can replace myths and unsubstantiated theories about these groups (Bean & Crane, 1996).

The training of many therapists is not sufficient to prepare them to work with Latino clients (Pastor, 2002). Several scholars have recognized the need for culturally sensitive research in the literature of mainline professional journals to educate family therapists (Fine, Demo, & Allen, 2000; Morales, 1997; Pederson, 1988; Ponterotto &
Without more professional research, it is difficult to establish a curriculum that is culturally sensitive and reliable for the education of marriage and family therapists regarding racial and ethnic clients (Bean & Crane, 1996). The training of many therapists is not sufficient to prepare them to work with Latino clients (Pastor). Research may help us understand how to grasp a client’s worldview without unwittingly imposing that of the mainstream culture and negating the legitimacy of the client’s viewpoint.

Marriage and family therapists work from information that is based primarily on research with white populations conducted by white researchers. Marriage research generally has been focused on couples that are white, middle-class, and college-educated (Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990; Levenson, Carstensen, & Gottman, 1993; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1995). Non-white, non-predominant populations may miss out on effective therapy when white, predominant norms are used as the standard of “healthy” or “functioning.” We need to know more about ethnically and otherwise diverse populations so that we can be more respectful and effective in our services.

There is little information concerning Latinos and marital satisfaction, marital stability, communication styles, and conflict resolution styles, and the little research that can be found is outdated and rarely applied to marriage and family therapy. In the 1980s, empirical research of Latinos emphasized social adaptation, “migration, immigration, acculturation, socioeconomic incorporation, minority group status, and the entry of women into the labor force” (Vega, 1990, p. 1016) without a major emphasis on implications for marriage and family therapy.
Research may be helpful in treating marital difficulties in couples, but the results may not be applicable across cultures (Vega, 1990; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989). Marital quality has been researched and studied well, identifying many important elements, but rarely does the research examine differences across cultures concerning factors that contribute to marital quality (Morales, 1997). Each culture has its own unique anthropological, sociological, economic, and political dynamics (Dillard, 1983) and a one-size-fits-all approach is naïve and ignorant of the culture of others. Stereotypes of behaviors have resulted in naïve and narrowly defined criteria for defining what is normal in the dominant culture (Pederson, 1988). The proclivity among therapists may be to treat minority families as if they were the same as those in the mainstream culture, or therapists may treat these families as overly different and/or dysfunctional. Without sufficient research, it can be difficult for therapists to make informed decisions concerning even basic clinical issues and concerns (Bean & Crane, 1996).

Research has been done concerning conflict resolution styles and communication styles of U.S. families (Sprey, 1999), but research is sparse when considering these issues and the Latino American family. This presents a need to conduct research on conflict resolution styles and communication styles with Latino families and to look at the differences cross-culturally so that therapists may more effectively address issues of communication and conflict in therapy with Latinos.

Purpose

The present research will analyze relationship satisfaction, relationship stability,
communication styles, and conflict resolution types among Latino men and women compared to non-Latino white (Caucasian) men and women through the use of the RELATtionship Evaluation inventory (RELATE; Holman, Busby, Doxey, Klein, & Loyer-Carlson 1997), a self-report questionnaire. RELATE will be used in this study for its ability to compare the Latino and Caucasian samples on the scales of relationship satisfaction, relationship stability, communication, and conflict resolution. The same instrument is administered to both Latinos and Caucasians; therefore, we can compare the data.

Objectives

The research objectives are:

1. Determine the dominant individual communication styles among Latino and Caucasian men and women, which communication styles predict greater marital satisfaction, and which styles predict greater marital stability.

2. Determine the dominant conflict resolution types among Latino and Caucasian men and women, which conflict resolution types predict greater marital satisfaction, and which styles predict greater marital stability.

3. Compare and contrast the results of objectives one and two between the Latino sample and the Caucasian sample.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

According to a family systems perspective, it is probable that couple relationship factors related to communication and conflict resolution styles are important predictors of marital satisfaction and stability (Holman & Larson, 1994). However, these communication and conflict resolution styles also are related to the particular cultural and family contexts in which people are raised. Falicov (1998) suggested that within ethnic cultures, the degree of family connectedness significantly shapes the style of communication and conflict resolution, two areas of frequent attention in family therapy. This broadly includes Latino families. A review of the literature reveals that studies on Latino families are sparse and those that are available are old (Bean & Crane, 1996; Falicov). This chapter will review culture, culturally competent therapists, marital satisfaction, marital stability, communication styles, and conflict resolution types among Latinos and the mainstream Caucasian population in the U.S.

Culture

Culture is a product of a dynamic and collective process that a society uses to make sense of and to organize its world as systems of shared meanings (Huff & Kline, 1999; Linton, 1945; Silvester, Anderson, & Patterson, 1999, Smith & Peterson, 1996). Dillard (1983) suggested that culture includes “shared belief systems, behavioral styles, symbols, and attitudes within a social group” (p. 10). In literature, culture has been used to mean the same thing as race and ethnic group, but there are different cultures within
ethnic and racial groups (Ponterotto & Pederson, 1993). For instance, white Americans are made up of Irish, Italian, German, and other ethnic groups. Ponterotto and Pederson pointed out that there are still more diverse cultures within these ethnic groups that include such factors as religion, length of time in the United States, socioeconomic status, and so forth. For these reasons, a one-culture-fits-all approach in therapy is not going to be effective, even within an ethnic group (Falicov, 1998). According to Dillard, there is a changing nature of cultural values of which therapists must be aware. An example of changing culture is seen by the increasing acceptance of assertive behavior among Anglo women today when it was once considered unacceptable.

"Ethnicity refers to a group’s common ancestry through which its individuals have evolved shared values and customs" (McGoldrick, 2003, p. 236). Rose (1964) classified ethnicity as a group of individuals sharing a unique social and cultural heritage (e.g., language, custom, religion) that is passed on between generations. It is described by Yinger (1976) as a section of a larger society whose members have a common origin and participate in activities in which the common origin and culture are significant components.

Ethnic minorities are currently growing at a faster rate than their majority counterparts (Williams & Wilson, 2001). Williams and Wilson, along with Walsh (2003), go on to suggest that Latinos will be the largest ethnic minority group of people, outnumbering blacks, by the middle of the 21st century. Morales (1997) used the term Latino to identify persons of Latin American descent, specifically people from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America residing in the United States. Many misconceptions and half-truths about minorities,
including Latinos, are generally held by the public and by the mental health community in particular (Fine, 1993) in the form of stereotypes. The majority group (often called the dominant or mainstream group) holds the balance of power, affluence, and influence in society (Ponterotto & Pederson, 1993). This affects how services are offered and delivered, often stigmatizing minorities and using inappropriate norms in coercive ways with minority populations.

Stereotypes are labels “wherein certain characteristics are ascribed to persons based on the group with which they are affiliated” (Porter & Samovar, 1976). Jen (2002) noted that therapists’ categorical descriptions of individuals based on cultural characteristics can result in stereotyping and are potentially counter-therapeutic. It is also noted by McFadden (2001) that mental health professionals have a responsibility to be competent cross-culturally; counselors must avoid stereotyping clients from diverse cultures. Therapists’ relying on stereotypes alone hinders the communicative process between the therapist and client (Dillard, 1983). For instance, Falicov (1996) suggested that there is a prevailing notion of machismo about the Latino culture and a common misconception that engaging Mexican American fathers in family therapy is difficult. There is a belief by some that there is a stronger family orientation among Latinos than Anglos. Vega (1990) reported that this has been a common and consistent theme for decades in the social science literature. Vega goes on to say that this stereotype is controversial and the empirical evidence has been inconsistent, suggesting there is insufficient empirical evidence to support these notions and that there also are great variations among these variables within stereotyped groups.
According to Dillard (1983), “What is viewed as pathological in one culture may not be in another” (p. 87-88). For example, Brice-Baker (1996) suggested that violence from a husband toward his wife in an attempt to control or punish her might be viewed as acceptable in one culture and abusive in another. Several authors noted that definitions of normality are influenced by subjective worldviews and the larger culture (Gergen, 1991; Walsh, 2003). Martinez (1977) pointed out that cultural elements native to Latinos are not always the same as those of Anglo society. Falicov (1998) took this further by suggesting that an understanding of the Latino culture can help therapists recognize what is normal in a particular culture and avoid diagnostic labels, such as enmeshment, that do not fit the situation or context.

Culturally Competent Therapists

According to demographic trends, therapists will be working more and more with ethnically diverse couples who may need help with their problems (Falicov, 1998; Mackey & O’Brien, 1998). Walsh (2003) defined cultural competence as the awareness and understanding of cultural differences and similarities; it is the ability to “question the dominant values and explore the complexities of cultural identity” (p. 244). Many practitioners and students are unaware of the limitations of traditional and theoretical forms of communication in cross-cultural relationships (Dillard, 1983).

The goals of most therapists reflect the standards and values of the majority society, as do the goals of most counselor-education programs (Dillard, 1983). According to Walsh (2003), a therapist’s mainstream preconception about the definition of a normal
family pathologizes relationship patterns that do not match those of the mainstream majority. If therapists continue to employ only middle-class Anglo treatment interventions with Latino clients, they may be unable to help their Latino clients reach positive outcomes (Lorien, 1974; Morales, 1976). Morales (1997) reported that socioeconomic factors, national origin, and acculturation level limit the degree to which any generalizations apply to Latinos as a group. Just as it is not good to generalize between the majority culture and minority culture, Dillard suggested that it would be a mistake for family therapists to generalize the problems or cultural strengths among Latino nationalities (e.g., Puerto Ricans as similar to Mexican Americans).

As early as 1983, Dillard said that traditional notions that emphasize a monocultural or a general counseling approach to everyone disregards cultural differences. In addition, in 1977, Ruiz and Padilla suggested that Latinos have often rejected traditional counseling services due to linguistic problems, class, and cultural variations. Counselors and therapists have literature available to them on working cross-culturally with clients (Falicov, 1998; McGoldrick & Giordano, 1996; Morales, 1997; Vega, 1990; Walsh, 2003; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989). However, a search of literature revealed very little about Latino couples' communication styles and conflict resolution types related to marriage satisfaction and stability that could inform the work of marital therapists.

Marital Satisfaction

Snyder (1979) defined marital satisfaction as an individual's personal impression of specific components within the marital relationship. Snyder went on to identify some of the
components in marital satisfaction such as communication, conflict management and resolution, finances, and children, to name a few. A more recent description of marital satisfaction by Doxey and Larson (1997) is comprised of the levels of satisfaction a couple experiences with physical intimacy, love, how conflicts are resolved, the quality of communication, amount of relationship equality, amount of time together, and overall satisfaction with the relationship.

There is an increased likelihood of marital satisfaction when there is a higher ratio of positive to negative events (Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Russell-Chapin, Chapin, & Sattler, 2001). Gottman (1993) went on to say that in general and during conflict in particular, "Negativity is dysfunctional only when it is not balanced with about five times the amount in positivity" (p. 14).

Fowers and Olsen (1993) suggested that marital satisfaction forms a factor of marital quality. They suggest that that disharmony and inclination towards divorce and marital instability form another factor of marital quality. Relationships that are satisfying also tend to be stable (Doxey & Larson, 1997). However, Doxey and Larson reported that it also is possible to have an unsatisfying yet stable relationship.

Communication and Marital Satisfaction

Couples who are able to confide in their mates, share outside interests, and calmly discuss and exchange ideas are more satisfied in their marriages (Marioles & Hammer, 1996). Burlenson and Denton (1997) noted that communication skills relate positively to satisfaction for non-distressed couples but not for distressed couples. Similarly, Okun (1991) found that couples with better communication skills reported high marital
satisfaction and those with poor communication reported low marital satisfaction. Frequency of arguing was reported by Kurdek (1994) as negatively related to marital satisfaction. It seems, therefore, that communication in the form of calm and positive discussion is an important indicator of marital satisfaction.

**Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction**

The relationship between conflict resolution styles and marital satisfaction is not understood well (Winemiller & Mitchell, 1994). It has been found that a husband’s level of marital satisfaction is a significant predictor of attacking conflict resolution strategies (Marchland & Hock, 2000) and that the avoidance of conflict may actually predict a weakening of marital satisfaction over time (Gottman, 1993). Several researchers have pointed out that avoidance of differences will not resolve them, possibly resulting in conflict that is disruptive to relationships and distressing to each partner (Baucom, Notarius, Burnett, & Haefner, 1990; Gottman, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Levenson et al., 1993). Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) found that husbands and wives are much happier when they agree on how conflict should be managed, particularly when they agree that conflict should not be avoided. Couples with a tendency toward avoiding conflict have been reported to experience lower marital satisfaction than couples who confront conflicts (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Rands, Levinger, and Mellinger (1981) also found satisfaction to be the lowest when spouses avoided or escalated conflict, particularly so when one partner was perceived by the other as uncompromising. The consensus seems to be that couples that avoid conflict generally have lower marital
satisfaction than those who confront it. However, confrontation does not always end in marital satisfaction.

Negative and aversive conflict resolution styles are negatively related to marital satisfaction, as evidenced in several studies (e.g., Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). According to Rands et al. (1981), however, openness in dealing with conflict is not always connected with high marital satisfaction. This was an assertion made by their study of 244 northern California marriages. Both spouses self-reported on conflict and marital satisfaction. Being open does not guarantee that one or both people in a relationship will not have their feelings hurt. Van den Broucke, Vaandereycken, and Vertommen (1995) studied 21 maritally distressed and 21 non-distressed couples through video taped interactions that were reviewed and coded. From this study they reported findings that a couple’s sense of well-being in a relationship is greatly influenced by their ability to manage mutual conflict. A couple’s conflict management style becomes more influential over time in predicting marital satisfaction as found by Schneewind and Gerhard (2002) in their 5-year longitudinal study that followed 83 newlywed couples recruited from the marriage files of the Bavarian Bureau of Statistics.

*Latinos and Marital Satisfaction*

Research is quite sparse when it comes to reporting marital satisfaction among Latinos (Bean & Crane, 1996; Falicov, 1998; Morales, 1997). However, Falicov suggested that it is common for Latinos to experience low marital satisfaction when they are indirect in their communication and attempt to avoid conflict. More recent research
on Latinos suggested that Latinos report lower marital satisfaction than Asians or Caucasians in traditional marriages among students from the University of Southern California, Fullerton (Schammann, 1999). No research was found that connected communication and conflict resolution to marital satisfaction among Latino couples.

Marital Stability

Marital stability is the propensity to remain married (Holman & Larson, 1994; Kayser, 1993). Marital instability, then, would be an inclination toward dissolving a marriage even if dissolution is not the ultimate outcome (Kayser). Kayser goes on to mention that marital dissolution is the ending of a relationship, usually through divorce or permanent separation. However, marital stability also can be thought of as how much the partners in a couple relationship think about or desire separation or divorce (Doxey & Larsen, 1997) without actually dissolving the relationship. A more recent definition states that marital stability relates to whether or how long the union lasts (Lamanna & Reidman, 2000).

People with accepting attitudes toward divorce may feel less pressure to stay in an unhappy marriage compared with those who hold a rejecting attitude toward divorce (Amatto & DeBoer, 2001). Amatto and DeBoer defined commitment as the inclination to remain in a marriage even when it is distressed or when alternatives to the marriage exist. Commitment does not predict marital satisfaction, but it does contribute to the length of the marriage (Silberman & Robinson-Kurpius, 1997). Amatto and DeBoer went on to suggest that committed spouses do not stay in less-than-ideal marriages because they feel trapped,
but because they have trust in a long-term perspective and have optimism toward the possibility of a renewed relationship. Crohan (1992) and Newman and Newman (1987) found that the creative use of conflict is a relationship skill required for maintaining a marriage.

Long-term, mutually satisfying relationships with others are made easier through the use of positive social skills support, compromising, and conflict resolution (Amatto & DeBoer, 2001). According to Amatto & DeBoer, many longitudinal studies reported that poor relationship skills lead to marital dissolution.

Several variables are associated with divorce that are not as prevalent in couples that stay together. Several authors (Amatto & Rogers, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Leonard & Roberts, 1998) suggested that divorcing couples communicate less clearly, do not listen attentively to their spouses, are less positive and more negative in the expression of emotion in marital conversations, respond to criticism defensively, avoid or withdraw from conflictual discussions and have greater difficulty resolving conflict, and spend less time together. Gottman’s (1993) findings suggested that in stable couples, husbands were less angry, displayed more affection, and whined less, whereas the wives in more stable couples demonstrated less anger and more interest in the relationship.

Parents with an unstable relationship can influence the stability, or lack thereof, of their children’s relationships. Studies show that couples who report having unhappily (but continuously) married parents also demonstrate a large number of problems in their own marriages (Belsky & Isabella, 1998; Booth & Edwards, 1990).

There is more positivity in stable couples than negativity, which is reversed for
unstable couples (Gottman, 1993). Conversations of unstable couples tend to be quite negative (Gottman, 1993) and, according to Gottman (1994), negative attributes of conflict have been associated with marital dissolution and are common in distressed marriages. Gottman (1994) also reported that stable couples showed more positivity toward their partners than unstable couples and used more validating comments.

Gottman (1993) reported three styles of conflict resolution found in stable couples: validating, volatile, and avoidant, distinguished by their problem-solving behaviors. He also reported that couples with a hostile or hostile/detached style of conflict resolution behavior tended to be unstable. These findings were established by observing couples in discussion and using a coding system to monitor the comments and gestures every two seconds. According to Gottman (1994, 1999), couples that experience contempt also tend to become physiologically aroused during conflict and are more likely to seek divorce. Couples who soothe one another during a conflict tend to resist the downward spiral to divorce. Fowers and Olsen (1993) reported that disharmony and proclivity for divorce and marital instability form a factor of marital quality.

Research focusing on Latinos and marital stability is scarce (Frisbie et al., 1980); it also is old and may not be currently applicable. Frisbie and colleagues also found that important aspects to marital stability among Anglos may be different from those of other cultural groups.

Latinos often, and perhaps stereotypically, have been noted as having an unusually strong family system (Frisbie et al., 1980). Research shows this to some degree in that the rise in the Anglo divorce rate exceeded that of the Latino American rate in 1960s and
1970s (Frisbie et al.). According to the same report, Latino Americans had the lowest proportion of marital instability and blacks reported the highest. Frisbie et al. reported that in 1970, Latino American women had the smallest proportion of divorce in every age group in comparison to Blacks and Anglos. This information is quite different when separated rather than divorced couples are compared. The proportion of women who were currently separated was higher, in every cohort, among Latino Americans than among Anglos in 1960 and 1970 (Frisbie et al.).

According to Vega (1990) the available research suggests that Latino families are increasingly susceptible to marital disruption. However, Bean and Tienda (1987) reported negligible differences in rates of marital disruption between non-Latino whites, Mexican Americans, and Cuban Americans, but Puerto Rican rates are much higher than those of the other groups. Some research suggests lower divorce rates for Mexican Americans (Frisbie, Opitz, & Kelly, 1985), but Bean and Tienda reported that when separation is included in marital disruption, such differences disappear. Current research suggests that divorce is not common among Latinos of any social class (Falicov, 1998). The empirical question remains: what cultural differences in relationship dynamics between Latinos and non-Latinos (Vega, 1990) exist, and how might these relate to marital satisfaction and marital stability in Latino marriages compared to non-Latino marriages?

Communication

Communication is defined as “transmitting information and meaning from one individual to another” (James & Cinelli, 2003, p. 41). Many studies show that
inappropriate communication skills and interactions, particularly in conflictual situations, are strong predictors of the stability and satisfaction of a couple’s relationship (e.g., Filsinger & Thoma, 1988; Gottman, 1994, 1999; Gottman et al., 1998; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). There is evidence that patterns of couples’ communication are associated with current satisfaction in a relationship and predict future satisfaction (Hahlweg, Kaiser, Christensen, Fehm-Wolfsdorf, & Groth, 2000). Doxey and Larson (1997) found that people who regard themselves and their partners as high on the communication styles of empathy, expressing love, clear sending, noncritical comments, respect, attentiveness, self-control, and soothing toward partner tend to have more satisfying relationships. These findings come from the norms created by the responses of those who have complete the RELATE.

Communication processes among couples are complex and not easily understood (Orbe, 1995). Doxey and Larson (1997) noted that there are many ways to communicate, and that couples will often develop their own communication styles. Skills interventions such as those identified by Russell-Chapin et al. (2001) are appropriate for clients presenting in therapy with poor communication. However, these studies seemed to assume that communication processes are similar across various cultures.

Examining ethnic differences in communication is becoming more and more important, particularly as the United States becomes more diverse (Henry, 1990). Orbe (1995) observed that trying to understand the impact of ethnicity and culture on communication is a complex issue. Brislin (1993) pointed out that communication research suggests that culture plays an important role in how people experience
communication and that culture is highly linked with communication.

Fine (2001) described the function of language as the vehicle for sending meanings. Fine went on to suggest that clinical work of marriage and family therapy depends greatly on the observation of language and couple communication for impressions, diagnosis, and treatment. He continued, stating that some critical aspects of psychopathology are diagnosed and defined by language.

When a therapist and client are from different cultures, both rely greatly on cross-cultural verbal and nonverbal communications, leading to the need to understand diverse communication styles (Dillard, 1983). There are differences in communication styles within cultures as well. For example, Dillard noted that between Latino men and women, eye contact with an adult male might be acceptable but not appropriate with an adult female.

The amiability and gentility of the Spanish language contribute to the politeness and demeanor of a couple’s communication (Falicov, 1998). Falicov found that among Latinos, it is rude and insensitive to others’ feelings to demand clarification. She also noted that Latinos are raised to talk nicely, explain a lot, and give compliments. Perez-Arce (1985) reported that Latinos who perceived equal give and take in arguments reported greater quality of communication with their spouses.

Falicov suggested that the indirectness of communication between partners in Latino couples can compound difficulties in the relationship (Falicov, 1998). She also suggested that it is common for Latinos to employ communication styles that are indirect for the purpose of avoiding conflict and this tends to lead to secrets, lies, and low marital
satisfaction. Research by Falicov indicated that indirect and avoidant communication styles may be the dominant communication style among Latinos. However, Bean and Crane (1996) suggested that there is not enough research to confidently state a hypothesis on the dominant communication style among Latinos.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution styles are the interpersonal behaviors used in disagreements within the marital relationship (Marchland & Hock, 2000). Burman, Margolin, and John (1993) reported three styles of conflict resolution: physical aggression, verbal aggression, and withdrawal or avoidance. These styles of conflict resolution (excluding physical aggression) have similarities with the hostile, volatile, and avoiding styles respectively as mentioned in John Gottman’s research (1993, 1994, 1999). Gottman suggested validating as a fourth conflict resolution style. In validating conflict resolution styles, there is a lot of ease and calm in the discussion, feelings of validation, and feelings of importance between partners (Gottman, 1993). In the same article, Gottman described the volatile conflict resolution style as confronting conflict openly with a great deal of negativity as well as humor; it is romantic and passionate but risks dissolving into endless bickering. The avoidant conflict resolution style is marked by the avoidance of one partner toward the other partner’s attempts at persuasion throughout the interaction, and avoids the pain of confrontation and conflict (Gottman, 1993). Gottman’s (1993) description of the hostile conflict resolution style is marked by verbal contempt and more negative than positive interaction.
According to Gottman (1993) and Driver, Tabares, Shapiro, Nahm, and Gottman (2003) the well-being of a married couple’s relationship is determined by the way they handle conflict. Driver et al. also suggested that conflict is important and necessary in both happy and unhappy marriages. Based on Gottman’s (1993; 1994) research and research from the Gottman Laboratory Studies (Driver et al.), marital satisfaction can be present in the validating, volatile, and even avoidant conflict resolution styles. Studies on conflict resolution styles among couples tend to group participants according to their more prevalent style of conflict resolution rather than by combinations or interactions of conflict resolution style.

Collaboration, compromising, and accommodation are three styles of conflict resolution that can be labeled as validating. Collaborating behavior, in confronting disagreements, is validating, assertive, and cooperative and is associated with problem solving to find solutions (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000). According to the same report, the highest level of marital satisfaction was reported for both males and females who employed the collaborative conflict management style. Greeff and De Bruyne suggested that compromising also is validating, is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness, and is characterized by the proposal of a middle ground. Kilmann and Thomas (1975; Thomas & Kilmann, 1978) found that accommodating behavior is validating, unassertive, and cooperative and often is an attempt to seek harmony and soothe the other person.

An assertive, directing, and volatile conflict resolution style, though effective at times, is associated with higher marital distress than other conflict resolution styles (Russell-Chapin et al., 2001). Competing behavior is volatile, assertive, and
uncooperative and is linked to a win-lose style of arguing (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000). Greeff and De Bruyne reported that people who use competitive conflict resolution styles do not concern themselves with the needs of other people and are not concerned about the relationship. The lowest marital satisfaction was reported in couples where one or both of the spouses used the volatile and competitive conflict resolution style (Greeff & De Bruyne).

Avoidance behavior is not assertive; it is uncooperative and associated with withdrawal and not taking a position in conflictual situations (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000). Withdrawing from conflict and holding feelings inside are avoidant strategies (Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993). As reported in longitudinal studies, couples inclined to avoid conflict are not as satisfied with their marriages as couples who address conflicts (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989).

Couples who believe that conflict should be avoided reported lower marital satisfaction than couples who believed that conflict should not be avoided (Crohan, 1992). The couples interviewed in this study consisted of 133 Black and 149 White couples in their first marriage randomly selected from couples who applied for marriage licenses in Wayne county, Michigan. Although a couple employing this style can experience relationship satisfaction, as mentioned, the avoidance style of conflict resolution tends to be associated with low marital satisfaction (Gottman, 1993; Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000; Noller & Fitzpatrick, 1988; Pike & Sillars, 1985; Rands et al., 1981). However, avoidance strategies of conflict resolution also have been associated with satisfied and nondistressed couples (Gottman, 1993; Noller & Fitzpatrick; Pike & Sillars).
Some research has reported that men and women do not differ on avoidance (Chanin & Schneer, 1984); other research suggests that women report being more avoiding than men (Rahim, 1983). There are yet other reports that suggest that women are less prone to avoid than men and are more competitive than men in conflict resolution, but that men accommodate more than women (Duane, 1989). Gottman (1993) reported that among couples who exhibit the avoidant conflict resolution style, women avoid more than men and men show more disgust and contempt than women. Women seemed to find it particularly troubling when they or their husbands avoided conflict (Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000). Heavey et al. (1993) found that the husband’s avoidance was predictive of the wife’s becoming hostile among dissatisfied couples.

Styles of conflict resolution may be seen as an attribute of the person, similar to a personality style; types or categories of behavior; and unique styles of communication that people assume toward conflict (Greeff & DeBruyne, 2000). Schneewind and Gerhard (2002) found that conflict resolution styles seem to form during the first year of marriage and they seem to be habituated from then on. Based on their study of 120 interviews with spouses from 60 ethnically diverse couples who were married at least 20 years, Mackey and O’Brien (1998) found that styles of managing conflict by husbands and wives create differences in how men and women behave in relationships. Markman, Renick, Floyd, Stanly, and Clements (1993) found support for the potential of preventing marital discord through interventions that build skills in the various conflict management styles. Others (Russell-Chapin et al., 2001) found that it is helpful if the therapist can assist the couple to recognize and understand each other’s differing styles of conflict resolution.
Mackey and O'Brien (1998) reported that husbands and wives differed considerably in their principal styles of conflict resolution. Several studies suggested that couples differ in their ability to use conflict constructively and destructively; they also differ in the way they argue, react to, and act toward conflict (Burman et al., 1993; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977; Schaap, Buunk, & Kerkstra, 1988; Straus, 1979). Some studies have supported the assumption that men have a more competitive orientation to conflict than women and other research points out that women are more cooperative than men (Korobik, Baril, & Watson, 1993).

Working-class and middle-class couples may report similar relational styles but there are differences in how cultural groups resolve conflicts (Rubin, 1976). “Conflict resolution styles may vary as a function of culture and cognitive style as well as of sex-role differentiation” (Hoppe, Kagan, & Zahn, 1977, p. 591). According to Ohbuchi and Takahachi (1994), a conflict resolution style that is preferable in one culture may not even be acceptable in another. For example, in one study, Mexican Americans were found to be extremely avoidant of conflict when compared to Anglo Americans (Kagan et al., 1982). Research by Fry (1993), Hoppe et al., and Kagan et al. reported that cultures differ considerably in their approaches to conflict, with the greatest cultural differences arising in situations dealing with direct interpersonal conflict.

Research by Gabrielidis et al. (1997) on the comparison of preferred styles of conflict resolution between Mexico and the United States showed that Mexican students emphasized more concern for the outcomes of others than did students in the U.S. The authors suggest that this is a more avoidant style of conflict resolution.
Falicov (1998) suggested that the preferred conflict resolution style among Latinos in general is avoidance in order to maintain harmony. For example, Latinos will “publicly agree—or at least do not disagree—with each other in order to ‘get along’ and not make others uncomfortable” (p. 179). According to Falicov, this course of action gains harmony but at times is at the expense of a clear understanding of one another.

Various authors reported that proper demeanor that often is taught in Latino families suggests that it is best to have a warm approach toward others and avoid conflict (Falicov, 1998; Levine & Padila, 1980). However, this often leads to secrets, lies, and lower marital satisfaction (Falicov). Gottman and Krokoff (1989) suggested that longitudinal research is needed on Latino families’ specific styles of conflict resolution in marriage; conflict, including defensiveness, stubbornness, and avoidance, may be dysfunctional over the long term.

Burman et al. (1993) reported aggressive styles of conflict resolution among Latinos, including a great deal of verbal aggression. This is characteristic of the volatile conflict resolution style.

Summary, Purpose, and Research Questions

Examination of the literature shows that among articles on therapist cultural competence, few deal with direct application to marital therapy within the Latino culture. The bulk of what has been written is theoretical rather than empirical. Much of the data on Latino families is sparse and much of what is available is old. Couple relationship factors of communication and conflict resolution styles are important predictors of marital
satisfaction and stability and there is a lack of research on these topics pertaining to the growing Latino population in the United States. The purpose of this study is to investigate the conflict resolution types and communication styles that contribute to marital satisfaction and marital stability among Latino Americans as compared to Caucasians in the United States. The research questions are:

1. To what degree does each communication style (empathy, love, clear sending, noncritical, respect, attentiveness, controlled, and soothing) relative to the others predict marital satisfaction among Latino males, Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

2. To what degree does each conflict resolution type (validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile) relative to the others predict marital satisfaction among Latino males, Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

3. Which combination of communication styles (empathy, love, clear sending, noncritical, respect, attentiveness, controlled, and soothing) and conflict resolution types (validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile) predict greater marital satisfaction among Latino males, Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

4. To what degree does each communication style (empathy, love, clear sending, noncritical, respect, attentiveness, controlled, and soothing) relative to the others predict marital stability among Latino males, Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

5. To what degree does each conflict resolution type (validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile) relative to the others predict marital stability among Latino males,
Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

6. Which combination of communication styles (empathy, love, clear sending, noncritical, respect, attentiveness, controlled, and soothing) and conflict resolution types (validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile) predict greater marital stability among Latino males, Latino females, Caucasian males, and Caucasian females?

7. Is there a significant interactive effect across Latino subgroups for each of the variables (communication style, conflict resolution type, marital satisfaction, marital stability)?
CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to learn more about marital satisfaction and marital stability among Latino and non-Latino white (Caucasian) men and women in the United States, with a particular focus on communication styles and conflict resolutions types as contributing factors. These variables are operationalized within RELATE (Holman et al., 1997), a self-report questionnaire. A secondary analysis of data was used because the data have already been collected.

Population and Sample

The populations of interest in the current study are Latino and Caucasian couples in the United States. The sample is drawn from couples who took RELATE between 1997 and 2001 and live in the United States. RELATE will be described in more detail below. Participants were selected for this study from a larger sample on the basis of their ethnicity, language spoken in family of origin, age (18 or older), sexual orientation/preference (heterosexual), and relational status.

Approximately 20,000 participants in the United States who completed RELATE starting in 1997 (Busby, Holman, & Taniguchi, 2001; Carroll, Holman, Segura-Bartholomew, Bird, & Busby, 2001) comprise the RELATE data set from which samples for this study were drawn. The larger sample consists of all individuals and couples who have taken RELATE either on-line or by hard copy. Individuals and couples have completed RELATE on their own, under the recommendation of a clinician, or through a
course where an instructor used it as part of the course curriculum. It has been used at many universities across the United States in relationship enhancement and marriage prep classes (Busby et al.; Carroll et al.).

Particular criteria were needed for selecting participants for this study. There were 455 couples selected for the current study: 70 Latino American native Spanish speaking couples and 385 Anglo American non-Latino. This sample resembles the national population in terms of ethnicity. Therefore, the sample included 15.4% Latino and 84.6% Caucasian (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003) couples. This sample size is adequate to conduct the multiple linear regression analyses that were used to examine the data.

In addition to gender, age, level of education, religious affiliation, ethnicity, language spoken, and sexual preference, data related to participants’ marital status as well as length of relationship were selected from the larger data set (see Table 1 for demographic data). Participants were asked about their relationship to the person considered as “partner” in the inventory (i.e., casually dating, seriously dating, engaged, married, and friends or classmates). Only couples who were seriously dating, engaged, or married were included in this study. Sexual preference was assessed and only heterosexuals were used for this study. There also is a question to determine if couples are single (never married), married (but separated), cohabiting (living with your partner in an intimate relationship), divorced, remarried, married (first marriage), or widowed. Due to the fact that just over half of the couples fit into the category of single (never married), the phrases “relationship satisfaction” and “relationship stability” will
### Table 1

**Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Latino males % (N = 70)</th>
<th>Latino females % (N = 70)</th>
<th>Caucasian males % (N = 385)</th>
<th>Caucasian females % (N = 385)</th>
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<td>30-39</td>
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</table>

frequently be used and include marital satisfaction and marital stability in their definitions.
Instrument

Over the last 20 years, three versions of a comprehensive instrument that evaluates relationships and individuals as well as family, culture, and couple contexts have been published. The most recent version is called the RELATionship Evaluation Inventory (RELATE; Busby, Doxey, Holman, Klein, & Loyer-Carlson, 1997). All participants in this study used the same version of RELATE. RELATE was developed from a revision of the PREParation for Marriage (PREP-M) questionnaire (Holman, Busby, & Larson, 1989), a review of over 50 years of research on premarital predictors of later marital quality and stability, and lots of analyses of items (Busby et al., 2001).

RELATE is a multidimensional, couple assessment instrument that contains extensive measures of family background, relationship experiences, culture, and values. It is used in clinical as well as academic settings by therapists, college instructors, family life educators, and clergy as a research and outreach tool. Researchers can use RELATE to collect information on the nature and development of relationships and it is used in clinical and academic settings to evaluate and strengthen relationships (Carroll et al., 2001).

There are 271 items plus demographic questions on the RELATE inventory. Fifty-nine of the items were used in the current study (see the Appendix for items used in this study). There are many scales created by the items in the RELATE including personality characteristics, values, family background, marital conflict resolution types, couple communication styles, other relationship scales (comprised of miscellaneous topics), relationship satisfaction, and relationship stability. Four scales were utilized:
couple communication styles, marital conflict resolution types, marital satisfaction, and marital stability. Each scale is described below in greater detail. Participants had two methods to choose from to complete the inventory: through the Internet or a paper and pencil version. The demographic questions required the participant to choose the applicable information from a selection of answer choices (e.g., religion or income level).

Each scale was comprised of several items. The scale items had five Likert-type responses to choose from ranging from never to very often or very dissatisfied to very satisfied. These item scores are averaged within each scale, resulting in a composite score for each scale.

RELATE has been translated into Spanish. The only difference between the Spanish and English versions of RELATE is that the Spanish version has additional questions about native language, amount of time in the United States, and which Spanish speaking country respondents are from.

RELATE was translated into Spanish using a Modified Serial Approach (MSA; Carroll et al., 2001). Carroll describes the serial approach for instrument translation as a six step process: “1) translating by committee; 2) assessing clarity and equivalence; 3) back-translating; 4) field-testing with both monolinguals and bilinguals; 5) assessing reliability; and 6) interpreting results” (p. 215). The MSA adds two modifications to this approach. Carroll et al. explained these modifications as (a) “bilinguals who are native to both the source and target languages should be used in the translating, back-translating, and field-testing steps of the translation process” and (b) “obtain the services of the most qualified translators available. A qualified translator should be defined as one who has
experience and training in the science of translation, as well as competent knowledge of the population for which the instrument is intended” (p. 218).

Cultural context in RELATE is very important to the current study and includes such variables as race, geographical location, socioeconomic status, and religion. Three quarters of the Latino sample were Catholic and almost half of the Caucasian sample was LDS. Differences might be due to religious affiliation rather than ethnicity. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. RELATE also is available in Portuguese. The current study used data from participants who used the Spanish version of RELATE and the results were compared with corresponding data from participants who used the English version.

RELATE is based on a systemic model of relationships (Busby et al., 2001). “The systemic theory underlying RELATE is that relationships are developed and maintained within a series of contexts or subsystems” (Carroll et al., 2001 p. 219). The conflict resolution type, couple communication style, marital satisfaction, and marital stability variables are only a portion of RELATE and of particular interest to this study.

The Couples Context section of RELATE measures areas of communication, conflict, and patterns of relating. These patterns of marital interaction create a level of satisfaction and stability for each partner. The scales in the Couples Context section are based on Gottman’s model of marital interaction (Busby et al., 2001).

Marital Satisfaction and Marital Stability

Marital satisfaction is defined as a perceived high degree of adjustment or happiness with a marital relationship (Kayser, 1993). Marital satisfaction is assessed in
RELATE by seven items. The five Likert-type responses for these items range from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. These item scores are averaged and the result is a composite score of the overall level of marital satisfaction. Results from the study by Holman and Larson (1994) suggest that the higher the RELATE scores, the higher the marital satisfaction and marital stability.

Doxey and Larson (1997) operationalized marital stability by asking how often partners have thought the relationship might be in trouble, how often partners have discussed ending the relationship, and how often the partners have separated and then gotten back together. This definition removes the difficulty associated with a dichotomous definition of stability as divorce/no divorce. Three items comprise the marital stability scale. The five Likert-type responses range from never to very often. These item scores are averaged and the result is a composite score of the overall level of marital stability. Holman and Larson (1994) reported that the “means for the most satisfied and most stable individuals were usually significantly higher than the least satisfied and stable individuals and individuals who had canceled or delayed marriage” (p. 43).

**RELATE and Communication**

Eight scales are comprised of items that assess the couple communication styles. These scales are empathy (3 items), love (4 items), clear sending (5 items), noncritical (3 items), respect (4 items), attentiveness (4 items), controlled (3 items), and soothing (3 items). Each item has five Likert-type response options ranging from never to very often. These item scores are averaged and the result is a composite score for each
communication style. Each scale has a coinciding scale with items that assess the participants’ perceptions of their partners on the same topic. Research by the RELATE Institute (2003) found that higher levels of effective communication (empathy, love, clear sending, and soothing) tend to be associated with higher marital satisfaction and stability.

Empathy is defined as understanding others’ feelings and what others try to say as well as the ability to listen in an understanding way (Doxey & Larson, 1997). Doxey and Larson defined the communication style of love as including a partner in one’s life, showing love, and finding the partner to be attractive and admirable. Clear sending is a communication style that Doxey and Larson defined as saying what is intended in a clear manner without struggling to find words to express one’s self and talking over problems and pleasant events. The use of tact in word choice when complaining and the censoring of complaints mark the noncritical communication style (Doxey & Larson). High scores of this indicate criticism and low scores of relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. Respect is defined by Doxey and Larson as not looking for glaring faults in a partner’s personality and not attacking one’s partner. High scores on this variable indicate disrespect and low scores of relationship satisfaction and relationship stability.

Attentiveness is defined as withdrawing to calm down and avoid provoking a conflict. High scores of this indicate lack of attention and low scores of relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. Doxey and Larson described the controlled communication style as not being physically tense or anxious and able to think clearly when there is a conflict and not feeling physically drained after an argument. High scores of this variable indicate lack of control and low scores of relationship satisfaction and relationship
stability. Soothing is the final communication style in RELATE and is defined as making a deliberate effort to calm one’s partner down when the other is overwhelmed, recognizing and making a conscious effort to calm down when overwhelmed, and taking a break to calm down and returning later when in an intense argument (Doxey & Larson).

**RELATE and Conflict Resolution**

Four items of RELATE (Holman et al., 1997; one item per type) are used to measure individuals’ conflict resolution types. Before asking the particular questions, RELATE explains what is entailed in each of the four conflict resolution types so that the participant will be able to make an educated assessment and informed decision as to what degree each conflict resolution type is personally applicable. Each of the four conflict resolution types has five Likert-type response options ranging from never to very often. For example, item #266 from RELATE states:

> In our relationship, conflicts may be fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since our making up is even grander. We have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm and loving relationship. Although we argue, we are still able to resolve our differences. In fact, our passion and zest for fighting actually leads to a better relationship with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection. (p. 12)

Answer choices for item #266 are as follows: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and very often. Scale scores are simply the Likert choice marked by a respondent.

In the RELATE instrument, “the Conflict Resolution scale is a measure of the degree of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and emotional flooding that people use when they are trying to resolve conflict” (RELATE-Institute, 2003, p. 7). “High scores on the conflict resolution scale [of RELATE] are related to fewer relationship problems,
higher relationship stability, and higher levels of satisfaction. Low scores on this scale are strongly related to high hostility in relationships” (p. 7). The conflict resolution scales are based on Gottman’s four types of conflict resolution: validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile.

**Validating.** Couples who endorse a validating style of conflict resolution at they value each other even when they are having a disagreement (Gottman, 1994; Holman et al., 1997). Holman and colleagues pointed out that these couples recognize the worth of their partners’ point of view and emotions, even if they do not agree with the particular opinion and they usually exercise self-control and are able to negotiate and compromise. Validating couples usually share interests and activities and put importance on the couple rather than individual goals and desires (Holman et al.).

**Volatile.** Volatile relationships are defined by arguments that are fought on a grand scale and each partner will often try to persuade the other to his or her own point of view (Gottman, 1993; Holman et al., 1997). Holman and colleagues also mentioned that although these couples argue on a grand scale, making up is usually grander. Couples with this type of conflict resolution are usually able to resolve their conflicts and exhibit a lot of affection (Holman et al.).

**Avoidant.** Avoidant relationships are defined by the tendency to minimize conflicts (Gottman, 1993; Holman et al. 1997). Avoidant couples would rather minimize the problems than take a lot of time trying to resolve them (Holman et al.). Holman and colleagues suggested that in this type, it is better to “agree to disagree” because open conflict does not seem to go anywhere. These couples think that good companionship is
important enough to overlook disagreements (Holman et al.).

Hostile. Hostile relationships are characterized by frequent and hot arguments (Holman et al., 1997). Holman and colleagues suggested that hostile couples use insults, sarcasm, and put-downs in their discussions with one another and these couples do not often give eye contact and detach themselves emotionally. Relationships for this type are more negative than positive in their interactions and have low marital satisfaction and stability (Gottman, 1993; Holman et al.).

Validity and Reliability of RELATE

"RELATE was developed by following the standards of educational and psychological testing" (Busby et al., 2001, p. 311). Busby et al. also reported that many pilot studies, preliminary factor analyses, content validity analyses, test-retest and internal consistency analyses, and the rewriting of many items went into developing the most recent version of RELATE. Concurrent validity for RELATE was established by comparing several scales with the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS; Busby, Crane, Larson, & Christensen, 1995), a widely used measure of marital adjustment. The RDAS is a revision of one of the most frequently used scales of marital quality, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Busby et al., 1995, 2001). The RDAS and RELATE do not share the same scales, but they do measure related areas of the couple relationship (see Table 2 for correlations between selected scales of the RELATE and the RDAS).

Construct validity also was described in the study by Busby et al. (2001) by reporting factor analyses that were conducted on data related to the major contexts of RELATE; 92% of the items loaded on the appropriate subscale. "All the correlations were in a range
Table 2

*Correlations Between Selected Scales of the RELATE and the RDAS*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
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<td>Satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>0.57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem areas</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive communication</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partner positive communication</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner negative communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gottman validating couple style</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gottman hostile couple style</td>
<td>-0.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* RDAS = Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale; Table from Busby et al., 2001, p. 313

between .45 and .65, suggesting there was a strong relationship yet still considerable distinction between constructs” (Busby et al., 2001, p. 312). “All correlations are in the appropriate direction and of sufficient strength to suggest that the instrument captures many important areas of couple functioning” (Busby et al., 2001, p. 313).

During the development of RELATE, preliminary analyses with pilot samples demonstrated that the scales representative of Gottman’s conflict resolution styles are distinct and reliable (Busby et al., 2001). The scales can be used with great accuracy to
distinguish between couples with and without a hostile conflict style (Busby et al.).

The Busby study used three samples to clarify reliability with different populations. The samples contained respondents who took RELATE from 1997 to 1999. The first sample matched the national percentages of race and religion. The second sample was a test-retest sample with a 14 to 21 day lapse of time between the test and retest. The third sample was a Latino sample with Spanish as their primary language (Spanish version of RELATE). A nationally representative subsample from all RELATE respondents was used to evaluate the reliability of RELATE. Most reliability scores (internal consistency and test-retest calculations) ranged between .70 and .90 (Busby et al., 2001). Nearly 60 scales were analyzed and only three had reliability estimates below .70 (Carroll et al., 2001).

"The original language version of the RELATE questionnaire demonstrated very good test-retest reliability on all of its scales (average scale category \( r = .77; \) range = .72 to .89)" (Carroll et al., 2001, p. 225). This indicates that the instrument is an empirically reliable measure. The Spanish version of RELATE achieved similar correlations between test and re-test (average scale category \( r = .79; \) range = .73 to .87; Carroll et al.). Carroll and colleagues reported that comparisons between the English and Spanish versions of RELATE indicate that the Spanish version of RELATE is reliable and valid with Latino couples in the United States (Carroll et al.).

**Procedures for Taking RELATE**

RELATE (Busby et al., 1997) is completed once by each participant. Each partner taking RELATE does so independently. Couples are instructed not to share responses
until after they have submitted their questionnaires for scoring. RELATE is available as a paper and pencil questionnaire in English or Spanish as well as online at https://relate.byu.edu/English/frmLogin.asp for the English version and https://relate.byu.edu/Spanish/frmLogin.asp for the Spanish version. RELATE costs five dollars per person through both on-line and hard copy methods. Completed hardcopy questionnaires are mailed to the RELATE institute for scoring and reports are returned to the respondents. Online versions are scored online and a printable report is provided. The RELATE report is personalized with details of each partner’s responses. The reports are about 20 pages long and include several easy-to-read bar graphs, as well as explanations for how to use and interpret the information, and resources to help participants improve their relationship.

Analyses

This study used portions of the Spanish and English versions of RELATE. Secondary analysis was used because the sample comes from an existing data set. Data are kept as part of a large database for research purposes. Multiple linear regression analysis was the main statistical procedure used for analyzing the data for each of the first six research questions. Continuum score assessments on each level of communication styles and conflict resolution types and on marital satisfaction and marital stability were used in the regression with levels of communication and conflict resolution as the independent variables and marital satisfaction and marital stability as dependant variables. Data were examined to check for violations of statistical assumptions (i.e.,
linear relationship; error randomly distributed [homoscedasticity of errors];
homoscedasticity of variance; no spuriousness).

Regression was used to measure the strength of relationships among the variables. Multiple regression was preferred rather than basic correlations for the fact the humans tend to employ combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types at the same time. A simple correlation would only show the influence of a variable in a vacuum, so to speak, in that other variables would not be taken into account in the interaction. Multiple regression takes into account influences from multiple factors, similar to how they are used by couples in real life.

The regression coefficient $b$ tells us the amount the dependent variable changes when the independent variable increases one unit and other independent variables are held constant. If $b$ is positive, the relationship of that independent variable with the dependent variable is positive. If $b$ is negative, the relationship is negative. $R^2$ is a measure that reports the proportion of variance explained by the regression. $R^2$ tells us how much our predictions about values of a dependent variable for a case would be improved by knowing the score of a case on the independent variable or variables. The two statistics are used in combination to explain the percentage of the total variation the independent variable has in the dependent variable and the type of relationship (positive or negative). Beta values tell us how much change in the dependent variable in standard deviation units is attributed to one standard deviation increase in the independent variable. Multiple regression tells us the proportion of variance explained by the model as a whole as well as by the individual factors and the statistical significance of the model as
a whole as well as for individual factors. The $F$-test is the key statistic in ANOVA. This tests the means of the groups formed by values of the independent variables. If they are different enough, then we infer that they did not occur by chance. If there is no significant difference ($p$ reports level of significance) in group means, then the independent variables did not have an effect on the dependent variable. When $F$ is about 1 we expect that the null hypothesis is correct.

The results of the multiple linear regression analyses tell us the degree to which each of the eight communication styles (empathy, love, clear sending, noncritical, respect, attentiveness, controlled, and soothing) predicts marital satisfaction in proportion to the others and the degree to which each relative to the others predicts marital stability. The results also tell us the degree to which each of the four conflict resolution types (validating, volatile, avoidant, and hostile) predicts marital satisfaction in proportion to the others and the degree to which each relative to the others predicts marital stability. Finally, the communication styles and conflict resolution types were combined to see which combinations predict greater marital satisfaction and marital stability. The results were compared between the Latino and Caucasian samples as well as between male and female respondents. Parsimony, meaning the best description of variance in the dependent variable with the fewest independent variables in the model, is of particular importance for research questions three and six.

The sample size was not sufficient to address the seventh question. The subcategories of Latinos were not sufficiently distributed across categories. Some categories had only one participant whereas the largest category (Mexico) had 51
participants. The other category would have been comprised of respondents from Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central America, South America, the United States, and other countries, representing too diverse a population to have clinically applicable results between categories. Creating an “other” category would defeat the objective of the research question in that only Mexico would be compared with the category of “other.”

RELATE has been approved by the IRB at Brigham Young University for use in research. The RELATE Institute Board of Directors also has approved the current study (T. B. Holman, personal communication, February 25, 2004). IRB approval was obtained from Utah State University.
The present study investigated communication styles and conflict resolution types as they contribute to relationship satisfaction and relationship stability among Latino males and females compared to Caucasian males and females. The RELATionship Evaluation inventory (RELATE; Holman et al., 1997), a self-report questionnaire, served as the data collection instrument. Versions of the same instrument were administered to both Latinos and Caucasians.

Multiple regression analyses of the data tell us the proportion of variance explained by a model as a whole ($R^2$) as well as by the individual variables in the model ($b$) and the statistical significance of each. Multiple regression was used to determine the relative strength of each variable (communication styles and conflict resolution types) as well as of combinations of independent variables in terms of their ability to predict the dependent variables (relationship satisfaction and relationship stability).

The communication styles in this study include empathy (EMP), perception of partner’s empathy (PPE), love (LOV), perception of partner’s love (PPL), clear sending (CLS), perception of partner’s clear sending (PCS), noncritical (NCR), perception of partner as noncritical (PPN), respect (RSP), perception of partner’s respect (PPR), attentiveness (ATN), perception of partner’s attentiveness (PPA), controlled (CNT), perception of partner as controlled (PPC), soothing (STH), and perception of partner as soothing (PPS). The conflict resolution types in this study include volatile (VOLT), avoidant (AVOD), validating (VALD), and hostile (HOST). For each research question,
scores for the respective variables (communication styles and conflict resolution types) were used in the regression.

Although ANOVAs were not conducted, means and standard deviations for each variable is provided (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). A visual examination of the means and standard deviations assists the reader in understanding the distribution of variance across groups.

First Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Communication Style Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

Participants were asked to rate how frequently, on a Likert-type scale, each item within the communication style subscales was used in the relationship (never, rarely, sometimes, often, or very often). Relationship satisfaction was the dependent variable and was assessed using seven items. Participants were asked to rate their level of relationship satisfaction on a Likert-type scale (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, or very satisfied). A composite score gave the overall level of relationship satisfaction.

**Latino Males**

Communication styles of Latino males accounted for 65% of the total variation in relationship satisfaction as reported by males \( (F = 5.764, p < .001; \ R^2 = .653; \) see Table 4 for all \( b \) values and statistical significance). Three communication styles reached statistical significance at the \( p \leq .05 \) level. They include LOV \( (b = .441) \), PPL \( (b = .254) \),
Table 3

Comparisons of Variables Across Gender and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Latino males (N = 70)</th>
<th>Latino females (N = 70)</th>
<th>Caucasian males (N = 385)</th>
<th>Caucasian females (N = 70)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2.61</td>
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(table continues)
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Latino females ((N = 70))</th>
<th>Caucasian males ((N = 385))</th>
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<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
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<td>.69</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>.73</td>
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Table 4

*Communication Styles as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: Latinos*

<table>
<thead>
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<td></td>
<td><em>b</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>0.441†</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.041*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.254</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.917</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>.960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.319†</td>
<td>.044*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s clear sending</td>
<td>-0.127</td>
<td>.455</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.670</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.122</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>.266</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as noncritical</td>
<td>-0.125</td>
<td>.195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.122</td>
<td>.294</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s attentiveness</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>.499</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-.158</td>
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</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication styles</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as controlled</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soothing</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>.167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Males (F = 5.764, R² = .653), Females (F = 4.832, R² = .612), N = 70 couples. *p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01. ***p ≤ .001. † = most important.

and PPE (b = .245). These are all positive relationships. The b values tell how many units of change in satisfaction to expect for each unit of change in communication style. For LOV, b exceeds that of both PPE and PPL, suggesting that LOV contributes more than PPE and PPL to relationship satisfaction for Latino males.

**Latino Females**

In the multiple regression predicting relationship satisfaction for Latino females, the communication styles accounted for 61% of the variance (F = 4.832, p < .001; R² = .612; Table 4). Two communication styles reached statistical significance at the p ≤ .05 level: CLS (b = .319) and LOV (b = .261), which also was statistically significant for Latino males (b = .441).

**Caucasian Males**

The communication styles of Caucasian males predicting relationship satisfaction
accounted for 68% of the variance in relationship satisfaction for Caucasian males ($F = 48.273, p < .001; R^2 = .681; \text{Table 5}$). Of the seven independent variables that achieved statistical significance at the $p \leq .05$ level, five have a positive relationship with relationship satisfaction. These include LOV ($b = .245$), PPL ($b = .230$), PPE ($b = .213$), PCS ($b = .135$), and PPS ($b = .101$). Two communication styles have negative relationships with relationships satisfaction, meaning that they predict a reduction in relationship satisfaction. These are PPR ($b = -.134$) and PPA ($b = -.007$).

**Caucasian Females**

In the multiple regression for the communication styles of Caucasian females predicting relationship satisfaction, the independent variables accounted for 72% of the variance in relationship satisfaction ($F = 57.970, p < .001; R^2 = .720; \text{Table 5}$). Of the five communication styles that achieved statistical significance at the $p \leq .05$ level, four have a positive relationship with relationship satisfaction: LOV ($b = .298$), PPL ($b = .225$), PPE ($b = .145$), and PPS ($b = .081$). The independent variable with the negative relationship to relationship satisfaction is PPR ($b = -.118$). All of the statistically significant communication styles for Caucasian females were statistically significant for Caucasian males as well.

Second Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Conflict Resolution Type Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

Participants were asked about various conflict resolution types and asked to rate the frequencies of each type on a Likert-type scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often, or
Table 5

**Communication Styles as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: Caucasians**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication styles</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>b</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>b</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sig.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sig.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>.048</td>
<td>.381</td>
</tr>
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<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.145</td>
<td>.004**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>.245†</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.298†</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>.344</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s clear sending</td>
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<td>.022*</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncritical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived of partner as noncritical</td>
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<td>.063</td>
<td>.077</td>
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<td>Respect</td>
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<td>-.096</td>
<td>.072</td>
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<td>.008**</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>.010**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.226</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s attentiveness</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.847</td>
<td>-.046</td>
<td>.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>.334</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.117</td>
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</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Soothing</td>
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<td>0.125</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>0.101</td>
<td><strong>0.009</strong></td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.029*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males ($F = 48.273$, $R^2 = 0.681$), Females ($F = 57.970$, $R^2 = 0.720$), $N = 385$ couples. $^*p \leq 0.05$, $^{**}p \leq 0.01$, $^{***}p \leq 0.001$. $^\dagger = $ most important.

very often). Relationship satisfaction, again, was the dependent variable.

Latino Males

Conflict resolution types accounted for 29% of the variance in relationship satisfaction for Latino males ($F = 5.358$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = 0.291$; Table 6). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that VALD ($b = 0.273$) is positively associated with relationship satisfaction. All other independent variables failed to reach statistical significance at the $p \leq 0.05$ level.

Latino Females

Conflict resolution types accounted for only 20% of the variance in relationship satisfaction for Latino females ($F = 3.097$, $p = 0.014$; $R^2 = 0.195$; Table 6). HOST ($b = -0.318$) is negatively associated with relationship satisfaction ($p < 0.001$). The remaining
Table 6

Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict resolution types</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.243</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>.273†</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.473</td>
<td>-.318†</td>
<td>.005**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Males (F = 5.358, R² = .291), Females (F = 3.097, R² = .195), N = 70 couples.

independent variables were not statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable.

Caucasian Males

Conflict resolution types accounted for 40% of the variance in relationship satisfaction for Caucasian males (F = 61.832, p < .001; R² = .399, Table 7). All four of the conflict resolution types were statistically significant predictors of relationship satisfaction at the p < .001 level. Two of the conflict resolution types have a positive relationship with the dependent variable: VALD (b = .223) and VOLT (b = .098). The other two conflict resolution types have a negative relationship to the dependent variable: HOST (b = -.368) and AVOD (b = -.103).
Table 7

Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: Caucasians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict resolution types</th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.044*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>-.103</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>.004**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td>.225</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-.368†</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.349†</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males ($F = 61.832, R^2 = .399$), Females ($F = 80.174, R^2 = .463$), $N = 385$ couples. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$. † = most important.

Caucasian Females

Conflict resolution types accounted for 46% of the variance in relationship satisfaction for Caucasian females ($F = 80.174, p < .001; R^2 = .463$; Table 7). Similar to the Caucasian males, all four of the conflict resolution types were significant predictors of relationship satisfaction at the $p < .01$ level or better. Two of the conflict resolution types have a positive relationship with the dependent variable: VALD ($b = .225$) and VOLT ($b = .052$). The other two conflict resolution types have a negative relationship to the dependent variable: HOST ($b = -.349$) and AVOD ($b = -.072$).
Third Research Question: Which Combinations of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types Predict Greater Relationship Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

To address this question, a stepwise multiple regression served as the statistical procedure to determine which combination of communication styles and conflict resolution types accounted for the most variance in relationship satisfaction for each ethnicity. A stepwise regression model is developed in stages. The \( p \) value was specified at .05 on the statistical computer program to be used to control entry and removal of effects from the model. The best explanatory variable is used first, then the second best, and so forth, as determined by the statistical computer program.

**Latino Males**

The results suggest that three of the independent variables were significant as the greatest predictors of relationship satisfaction for Latino males: LOV \( (b = .468) \), PPL \( (b = .281) \), and PPN \( (b = -.132; \text{Table 8}) \). None of the conflict resolution types were found to be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction in combination with any other conflict resolution type or communication style.

\( R^2 \) is the proportion of variance in satisfaction that is accounted for in this regression. \( R^2 = .588 \) for the combination of the communication styles of LOV, PPL, and PPN \( (F = 31.370, p < .001) \). This variance is greater than that of any other combination of communication styles and conflict resolution types. \( R^2 = .490 \) for the communication style of LOV by itself, suggesting that the communication style of LOV contributes to...
Table 8

Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as Noncritical</td>
<td>-.132</td>
<td>.041*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncritical</td>
<td>-.129</td>
<td>.044*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
<td>.213</td>
<td>.007**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males (F = 31.370, $R^2 = .588$), Females (F = 19.066, $R^2 = .540$), N = 70 couples. *p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01. ***p ≤ .001.

49% of satisfaction in the relationship among Latino males ($F = 65.446$, $p < .001$).

Latino Females

LOV ($b = .259$) and NCR ($b = -.129$) were statistically significant at the $p ≤ .05$ level of probability, PPE ($b = .213$) at the $p ≤ .01$ level, and CLS ($b = .436$) at the $p ≤ .001$ level (Table 8) as contributors to relationship satisfaction for Latino females. LOV was the only statistically significant variable for both Latino males’ and females’
combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types. None of the conflict resolution types were found to be significant predictors of relationship satisfaction in combination with any other conflict resolution type or communication style.

\[ R^2 = .540 \] for the combination of the communication styles of CLS, PPE, LOV, and NCR \( (F = 19.066, p < .001) \). This is greater than that of any other combination of communication style and conflict resolution type. \( R^2 = .404 \) for the communication style of CLS by itself, suggesting that CLS contributes to 40% of relationship satisfaction among Latino females \( (F = 46.082, p < .001) \).

**Caucasian Males**

The communication styles of LOV \( (b = .293) \), PPL \( (b = .241) \), PPE \( (b = .192) \), PPS \( (b = .112) \), and the HOST \( (b = -.130) \) conflict resolution type were significant at the \( p \leq .001 \) level of probability as contributors to relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males. PCS \( (b = .135) \), ATN \( (b = -.104) \), and PPC \( (b = -.074) \) were significant at the .01 level (Table 9).

\[ R^2 = .683 \] for the combination of communication styles of PPE, PPL, LOV, PPC, PPS, ATN, PCS, and the HOST conflict resolution type \( (F = 98.746, p < .001) \). This proportion of the variance is greater than that of any other combination of communication style and conflict resolution type. \( R^2 = .514 \) \( (F = 396.050, p < .001) \) for the communication style PPE by itself.

**Caucasian Females**

Values of \( b \) for CLS \( (b = .095) \) and PPC \( (b = -.065) \) were significant at the \( p \leq .05 \) level of probability; for RSP \( (b = -.103) \) and VALD \( (b = .059) \) at the \( p \leq .01 \) level; and
Table 9

*Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction: CAucasians*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males b</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Females b</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s clear sending</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>-0.104</td>
<td>0.002**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-0.130</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as controlled</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>0.008**</td>
<td>-0.065</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
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<td>0.000**</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.000***</td>
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<td>0.000***</td>
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<td>0.000***</td>
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<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>0.045*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.103</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Males (F = 98.746, R² = .683), Females (F = 124.902, R² = .733), N = 385 couples. *p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01. ***p ≤ .001.*
PPL ($b = .257$), LOV ($b = .256$), PPE ($b = .174$), and the HOST ($b = -.108$) conflict resolution type at the $p \leq .001$ level (Table 9). Five of the variables found in the combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types were common to both Caucasian males and females. These include HOST, PPC, PPE, LOV, and PPL.

The combination of the communication styles of PPE, LOV, PPL, RSP, PPC, CLS and the conflict resolution types HOST and VALD ($R^2 = .733, F = 124.902, p < .001$) account for approximately 73% of the variance of relationship satisfaction for Caucasian females. PPE by itself ($R^2 = .551, F = 454.539, p < .001$) accounts for 55% of the variance of relationship satisfaction among Caucasian females.

Fourth Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Communication Style Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

Participants’ scores for the various communication styles served as the independent variables for this regression. Relationship stability was assessed using three items. Participants were asked to rate their level of relationship stability on a Likert-type scale (very unstable, unstable, neutral, stable, or very stable). A composite score gave the overall level of relationship stability.

**Latino Males**

The results of the multiple regression suggest that none of the communication styles make a statistically significant contribution to relationship stability among Latino males (Table 10). The statistical significance is affected by the small sample size and a
Table 10

*Communication Styles as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Latinos*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication styles</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>( \text{Sig.} )</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
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<td>.967</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
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<td>.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>.353</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
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<td>.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
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<td>.251</td>
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<td>Respect</td>
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*(table continues)*
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as</td>
<td>-0.139</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlled</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>0.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soothing</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.316</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>0.147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soothing</td>
<td>0.322</td>
<td>0.288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males \((F = 3.067, R^2 = .501)\), Females \((F = 3.457, R^2 = .531)\), \(N = 70\) couples. *\(p < .05\). **\(p < .01\). ***\(p < .001\).

A larger sample size would probably produce statistically significant results. The \(R^2\) for this particular regression is quite sizable at .531, meaning that the predictive values of the communication styles is great. Even though PCS is not statistically significant, the amount of influence toward relationship stability is great \((b = .507)\) when taken into consideration with all other communication styles.

**Latino Females**

Communication styles accounted for 53% of the variance in relationship stability for Latino females \((F = 3.457, p < .001; R^2 = .531)\) for this multiple regression (Table 11). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that communication style of CNT is negatively associated with relationship stability \((b = -.313)\). No other independent variables reached the cutoff for statistical significance \((p \leq .05)\).
Table 11

*Communication Styles as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Caucasians*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication styles</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s empathy</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>.214†</td>
<td>.012*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear sending</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s clear sending</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noncritical</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>.818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as noncritical</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s respect</td>
<td>-.188</td>
<td>.010**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s attentiveness</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication styles</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as controlled</td>
<td>-.112</td>
<td>.032*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soothing</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Males ($F = 10.027, R^2 = .308$), Females ($F = 10.626, R^2 = .320$), $N = 385$ couples. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$. † = most important.*

**Caucasian Males**

In the multiple regression, communication styles accounted for 31% of the variance in relationship stability for Caucasian males ($F = 10.027, p < .001; R^2 = .308$; Table 11). Of the three conflict resolution types that achieved statistical significance at the $p \leq .05$ level, two have a negative relationship with relationship stability. These include PPR ($b = -.188$) and PPC ($b = -.112$). LOV ($b = .214$) had a positive relationship to relationship stability.

**Caucasian Females**

For this multiple regression, the communication styles predicted 32% of the variance in relationship stability for Caucasian females ($F = 10.626, p < .001; R^2 = .320$; Table 11). Of the four communication styles that achieved statistical significance, two have a positive relationship with the dependent variable of relationship stability: LOV ($b$
Communication styles with a statistically significant negative relationship to relationship stability include CNT ($b = -0.132$) and PPC ($b = -0.127$). LOV and PPC were the only two statistically significant predictors of relationship stability for both Caucasian males and females.

Fifth Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Conflict Resolution Type Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

Participants' scores for the various conflict resolution types served as the independent variables. The relationship stability composite score served as the dependent variable.

**Latino Males**

Conflict resolution types accounted for 32% of the variance in relationship stability ($F = 6.120, p < .001; R^2 = .323$) for Latino males (Table 12). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that the VALD ($b = .301$) conflict resolution type is positively associated with relationship stability.

**Latino Females**

In the multiple regression for the conflict resolution type predicting relationship stability among Latino females, the independent variables accounted for 22% of the variance in relationship stability ($F = 3.526, p = .007; R^2 = .216; Table 12$). The only conflict resolution type to achieve statistical significance was VALD ($b = .170$). This
Table 12

Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict resolution types</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>.086</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.001***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-.208</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males ($F = 6.120, R^2 = .323$), Females ($F = 3.526, R^2 = .216$), $N = 70$ couples. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$.

also was the only conflict resolution type to reach statistical significance in predicting relationship stability among Latino males.

Caucasian Males

In this multiple regression for conflict resolution types predicting relationship stability among Caucasian males, the independent variables accounted for 23% of the variance ($F = 28.090, p < .001; R^2 = .232$, Table 13). The results of multiple regression analysis indicated that HOST ($b = -.350$) is negatively associated with relationship stability.
Table 13

Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Caucasians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Resolution Types</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>$b$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>.703</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidant</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-.350</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>-411</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males ($F = 28.090, R^2 = .232$), Females ($F = 33.977, R^2 = .268$), $N = 385$ couples. *$p \leq .05$. **$p \leq .01$. ***$p \leq .001$.

Caucasian Females

Conflict resolution types accounted for 27% of the variance in relationship stability ($F = 33.977, p < .001; R^2 = .268$, Table 13). HOST ($b = -.411$) was the only conflict resolution type that was a significant predictor of relationship stability and it had a negative relationship. This was the only conflict resolution type to reach statistical significance in predicting relationship stability among Caucasian males as well.

Sixth Research Question: Which Combinations of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types Predict Greater Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

To address this question, a stepwise multiple regression served as the statistical procedure to determine which combination of communication styles and conflict
resolution types accounted for the most variance in relationship stability. The $p$ value was specified at .05 to be used to control entry and removal of effects from the model.

**Latino Males**

The results of the regression suggest that a combination of three of the independent variables was significant as the greatest predictor of relationship stability for Latino males (Table 14). The independent variables with statistical significance are the communication styles of PCS ($b = .385$) and RSP ($b = -.306$), and the VALD ($b = .221$) conflict resolution type.

$R^2 = .411$ for the combination of the PCS communication style, RSP communication style, and the VALD conflict resolution type ($F = 15.322, p < .001$). This proportion of variance is greater than that of any other combination of communication style and conflict resolution type. $R^2 = .277$ for the PCS communication style by itself, suggesting that the PCS communication style contributes to 28% of stability in the relationship among Latino males ($F = 26.006, p < .001$).

**Latino Females**

PPL ($b = .340$) and PPS ($b = .319$) were significant at the $p \leq .01$ level of probability, and CNT ($b = -.328$) at the $p \leq .001$ level in predicting relationship stability (Table 14) for Latino females. None of the conflict resolution types were found to be significant predictors of relationship stability in combination with any other conflict resolution type or communication style.

$R^2 = .423$ for the combination of communication styles of PPL, CNT, PPS ($F =$
Table 14

Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males b</th>
<th>Males Sig.</th>
<th>Females b</th>
<th>Females Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validating</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s clear sending</td>
<td>.385</td>
<td>.014*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>-.306</td>
<td>.012*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.340</td>
<td>.002**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>-.328</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males \(F = 15.322, R^2 = .411\), Females \(F = 16.104, R^2 = .423\), \(N = 70\) couples. *\(p \leq .05\). **\(p \leq .01\). ***\(p \leq .001\).

16.104, \(p < .001\). This is greater than that of any other combination of communication style and conflict resolution type. \(R^2 = .243 (F = 21.878, p < .001)\) for the communication style of PPL by itself.

Caucasian Males

The HOST \((b = -260)\) conflict resolution type and the communication styles of LOV \((b = .269)\) and PPC \((b = -.166)\) were significant at the \(p \leq .001\) level of probability.
and PPS at the $p \leq .01$ level in predicting relationship stability among Caucasian males (Table 15).

\[ R^2 = .323 \] for the combination of HOST conflict resolution type and the communication styles of LOV, PPC, and PPS ($F = 44.096, p < .001$). This is greater than that of any other combination of communication style and conflict resolution type. HOST by itself accounts for approximately 23% of the variance of relationship stability among Caucasian males ($R^2 = .226, F = 109.084, p < .001$).

**Caucasian Females**

A combination of six of the independent variables was statistically significant as the greatest predictor of relationship stability for Caucasian females. ATN ($b = .125$) and PPA ($b = .093$) were significant at the $p \leq .05$ level of probability; RSP ($b = -.216$), PPL ($b = .182$), and PPC ($b = -.166$) at the $p \leq .01$ level; and HOST ($b = -.267$) at the $p \leq .001$ level in predicting relationship stability (Table 15).

\[ R^2 = .337 \] for the combination of the HOST conflict resolution type and the communication styles of RSP, PPC, PPL, ATN, PPA ($F = 30.971, p < .001$). HOST by itself accounts for approximately 26% of the variance of relationship stability among Caucasian males ($R^2 = .260, F = 130.649, p < .001$).

Seventh Research Question: Is There a Significant Interactive Effect Across Latino Subgroups for Each of the Variables (Communication Style, Conflict Resolution Type, Relationship Satisfaction, Relationship Stability)?

The sample size was not sufficient to address this question. Out of the 70 Latino
Table 15

Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types as Predictors of Relationship Stability: Caucasians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>.269</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as soothing</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>-.260</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner as controlled</td>
<td>-.166</td>
<td>.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s love</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of partner’s attentiveness</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.035*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Males \((F = 44.096, R^2 = .323)\), Females \((F = 30.971, R^2 = .337)\), \(N = 385\) couples. \(*p \leq .05. \ **p \leq .01. \ ***p \leq .001.\)

couples, 51 were Mexican and the 19 remaining couples were distributed into the other categories: Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central American, South American, North American (U.S.), and other. The subgrouping sample was not representative of the national sample.
and some of the groups were too small for meaningful analysis. For example, some categories had only one respondent.
Just over half of the participants in the present study fit into the category of single (never married). For this reason, the phrases “relationship satisfaction” and “relationship stability” are frequently used and include marital satisfaction and marital stability in their definitions. The results of this study reveal which communication styles and conflict resolution types predict greater relationship satisfaction and which predict greater relationship stability among Latino and Caucasian men and women. The results further suggest which combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types predict greater relationship satisfaction and stability among Latino and Caucasian men and women. Finally, the results are compared and contrasted between Latino males and females, Caucasian males and females, Latino and Caucasian males, and Latino and Caucasian females.

**First Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Communication Style Relative to the Others Predict Marital Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?**

**Latinos**

Comparing the Latino males to the Latino females showed differences and similarities in what predicts satisfaction for each. For Latino males, three communication styles significantly predicted relationship satisfaction: perception of partner’s empathy, love, and perception of partner’s love. Love was the most important communication style
for Latino men. While love was a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction for Latino females, clear sending was the most important. These two were the only statistically significant communication styles as predictors of relationship satisfaction for Latino females.

Communicating with love means including a partner in one’s life, showing love, and finding the partner to be attractive and admirable. For Latino males, perceiving this type of communication from their partners also leads to relationship satisfaction. Perceiving partner’s love is not a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction for Latino females. These findings suggest that if Latino females include their partners in their lives, show love, and find their partners to be attractive and admirable, both partners will be more likely to be satisfied with the relationship. This is similar to Gottman’s (1994) findings that happy relationships share some common qualities, particularly the expression of positive emotions and affection.

It is interesting to note that clear sending had an important influence on relationship satisfaction among Latino females. However, for males, perception of partner’s clear sending was not an important influence on relationship satisfaction. In other words, when Latino females say what they mean, clearly and without struggling to find words to express themselves during conversations, they experience relationship satisfaction. Latino males, on the other hand, do not experience greater relationship satisfaction when they perceive this from their partner.

*Caucasians*

More similarities than differences were found when comparing the Caucasian
males to the Caucasian females. There were five communication styles in common between Caucasian males and females: perception of partner’s empathy, love, perception of partner’s love, perception of partner’s respect, and perception of partner’s soothing. The Caucasian males had two more communication styles that significantly predicted relationship satisfaction: perception of partner’s clear sending and attentiveness. Love had the most influence toward predicting relationship satisfaction for both Caucasian males and females.

For both males and females, the perception of empathy from their partner was a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. When either perceives that their feelings and messages are being listened to and understood, that person experiences greater satisfaction in the relationship. However, for both males and females, their own empathy toward the other was not a statistically significant predictor of their own relationship satisfaction.

Love and the perception of the partner’s love are statistically significant for both Caucasian males and females. This means that they both experience greater relationship satisfaction when they are each giving and receiving this communication style. In other words, as they include their partners in their lives and feel included in the lives of their partners, show love and perceive it, find their partners attractive and admirable, as well as feel attractive to and admired by their partners, relationship satisfaction tends to be greater. As mentioned for Latinos, this supports findings by Gottman (1994) that relationships that express positive emotions and affection tend to be happy ones.

Based on the data from the present research, when Caucasian males feel attacked
by their partners and believe that their partners are looking for personality flaws, their levels of relationship satisfaction reduce significantly. The present research suggests that the same is true for females. On the other hand, when males recognize that their partners make an effort to calm themselves and to help them clam down when they are both overwhelmed before continuing an intense argument, relationship satisfaction tends to be greater. Again, the present research suggests that the same is true for females.

Gottman and his colleagues (1998) suggest that relationships are more satisfying and stable when they provide for soothing of the male. This can include self-soothing. An example of this is taking a time out and then returning to discuss the issue later. However, the present research did not find male self-soothing to be a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. Soothing also implies soothing of the male by the female. This was found to be statistically significant for both Caucasian males and females when they perceive it from their partner. This can be done through softening confrontations by using less negativity in communication styles. This study found that perception of partner’s respect (disrespect) and attentiveness (lack of attention or stonewalling; Gottman, 1994) are statistically significant predictors of reduced relationship satisfaction when they are employed.

**Males**

The communication styles of statistical significance in predicting relationship satisfaction among Latino males are also statistically significant predictors of satisfaction for Caucasian males. The ones they share in common are perception of partner’s empathy, love, and perception of partner’s love. Love had the most influence toward
relationship satisfaction for both Latino and Caucasian males. It appears that males are more satisfied in their relationships when they feel understood, listened to, attractive (and attracted to), admired (and admiring of), and loved by their partners. However, Caucasian males have a few statistically significant communication styles that are not predictors among Latino males (perceived partner’s clear sending, perceived partner’s respect, attentive, and perception of partner as soothing). Of the few communication styles statistically significant only to Caucasian males, two reduce the potential for relationship satisfaction: perceived partner’s respect (fault finding and attacking) and attentiveness (withdrawing). These might be better named lack of respect and lack of attentiveness.

When there is an increased lack of respect and lack of attentiveness, relationship satisfaction decreases among Caucasian males. These findings support reports made by Lamanna and Reidman (2000).

Females

When comparing the Latino females to the Caucasian females on the statistically significant predictors of relationship satisfaction, only the communication style of love was common to both. While clear sending was the most influential predictor of relationship satisfaction among Latino females, it did not achieve statistical significance among Caucasian females. It would seem then that clear sending is a helpful predictor of relationship satisfaction for Latino females but not for Caucasian females. This lends support to the report by Walsh (2003) that that there are ethnic differences and similarities in marital interaction. This also supports Walsh in that therapists with mainstream preconceptions might not take into account interventions that focus on the
communication styles that have the greatest influence toward relationship satisfaction among Latino females. The mainstream focus would be on the communication style of love rather than clear sending, according to the results of this study. While love is also a statistically significant predictor among Latino females, it does not influence relationship satisfaction as much as clear sending.

Second Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Conflict Resolution Type Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

**Latinos**

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos

Latinos
employ avoidance as a conflict resolution type.

It is interesting to note that while the statistically significant hostile conflict resolution type ($b = -0.318$) has a great influence on relationship satisfaction, the volatile conflict resolution type is nonsignificant ($b = 0.002$) and has minimal influence on relationship satisfaction, as perceived by Latino women. Hostile relationships are characterized by heated arguing without apology:

We argue often and hotly. There are a lot of insults back and forth, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm. We don't really listen to what the other is saying, nor do we look at each other very much. One or the other of us can be quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, even though there may be brief episodes of attack and defensiveness. There are clearly more negatives than positives in our way of handling conflicts. (RELATE, item #269, p. 12)

On the other hand, heated arguing and then apologizing (and making up) characterize volatile relationships:

In our relationship, conflicts may be fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since our making up is even grander. We have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm and loving relationship. Although we argue, we are still able to resolve our differences. In fact, our passion and zest for fighting actually leads to a better relationship with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection. (RELATE, item #266, p. 12)

The following question arises: Why is it that heated arguing without apology is important and heated arguing followed by a sincere apology is not? One would think that apologizing would soften the negative effects of arguing and possibly influence relationship satisfaction. It seems as though if one apologizes, all significance at predicting relationship satisfaction is lost. There may be some benefit to additional study of apology types and heated arguing and how they influence relationship satisfaction.
Caucasians

All four conflict resolution types were statistically significant predictors of relationship satisfaction for both Caucasian males and females. There is less chance that findings are accidental among Caucasian males than among Caucasian females that the volatile and avoidant conflict resolution types predict relationship satisfaction. The hostile conflict resolution type was a greater predictor of relationship satisfaction than the other types of conflict resolution for both Caucasian males and females. This refutes the assertions made by Greeff and De Bruyne (2000) that the highest level of marital satisfaction was reported for both males and females who employed the collaborative or validating conflict resolution types. It is interesting to note that the presence of the negative influence of the hostile conflict resolution type on relationship satisfaction is greater than the positive influences of the validating and volatile conflict resolution types. This supports assertions by others (Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Russell-Chapin et al., 2001) that negative events outweigh positive events and that there is an increased likelihood of marital satisfaction when there is a higher ratio of positive to negative events. Gottman (1993) even suggested a ratio of five positives to one negative event needed to balance the effect of the negative event.

The avoidant conflict resolution style negatively influenced relationship satisfaction for both Caucasian males and females. This supports several studies (Baucom et al., 1990; Crohan, 1992; Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1998; Greeff & De Bruyne, 2000; Lamanna & Reidman 2000; Levenson et al., 1993; Rands et al., 1981)
that suggest that avoidance of conflict can have destructive effects and weakens relationship satisfaction.

Males

As mentioned above, all four conflict resolution types were statistically significant predictors of relationship satisfaction for Caucasian males, and the validating type was the only statistically significant predictor among Latino males. The results tell us that there are differences between Caucasian and Latino males in this sample, which raises additional questions. What makes the difference? We can hypothesize that the differences are due to ethnicity and culture. That hypothesis will need to be tested with further research. What factors contribute to more significance of all four conflict resolution types among Caucasian males than Latino males? Further research may be useful in exploring what influences these differences. This does not appear to be a small difference based on the greater influence each conflict resolution type had on relationship satisfaction for Caucasian males compared to Latino males. The present study finds that avoidance and hostility have a statistically significant negative influence on relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males. The presence of those same conflict resolution styles does not have a statistically significant influence on relationship satisfaction among Latino males. These differences between ethnic groups are important for therapists to be aware of so as not to disregard cultural differences (Dillard, 1983).

Females

The hostile conflict resolution type was the only statistically significant predictor
of relationship satisfaction among Latino women and all four types were statistically significant predictors of relationship satisfaction among Caucasian women. However, we find a similarity when we look at the conflict resolution type that contributes the most to relationship satisfaction. The results of this study suggest that the hostile conflict resolution type contributes more than any other to relationship satisfaction among both Latino and Caucasian females. The hostile conflict resolution type has a negative influence on relationship satisfaction. This gives more support to the assertions that negative events have a greater impact than positive events on relationship satisfaction and that there is an increased likelihood of marital satisfaction when there is a higher ratio of positive to negative events (Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff 1989; Russell-Chapin et al., 2001).

Third Research Question: Which Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types Predict Greater Relationship Satisfaction Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

*Latinos*

The combinations were quite different from each other between Latino males and females. Latino males had a combination of three variables that contribute the most to marital satisfaction. Latino females had a combination of four variables. Conflict resolution types did not meet the criteria to be included in the stepwise multiple regression for either males or females. The only similarity between the two combinations was the variable of love. Both males and females experience greater satisfaction in the relationship as they express love to their partner. Relationship satisfaction for males
decreases as they perceive criticism from their partners, and satisfaction decreases among females as they express criticism to their partner. It seems that as a female engages in criticism toward her partner, in turn, she experiences relationship dissatisfaction and a byproduct is that the male will also experience relationship dissatisfaction if he perceives the criticism. However, this does not mean that it is the female’s fault if satisfaction decreases for both because, as mentioned earlier, as males express love toward their partners, they experience greater satisfaction. Both have some responsibility in the relationship’s level of satisfaction.

Caucasians

For both males and females, eight independent variables combined to predict relationship satisfaction. Of those eight, five are common between males and females. These include perception of partner’s empathy, love, perception of partner’s love, perception of partner as controlled, and the hostile conflict resolution type.

One difference was found with the clear sending communication style. Males who perceived the clear sending (articulating problems and pleasant events in a clear manner) communication style from their partners reported greater relationship satisfaction, whereas the females reported greater relationship satisfaction when they expressed the clear sending communication style. So it seems beneficial to the relationship satisfaction of both males and females if the female engages in the clear sending communication style. Again, satisfaction for both in the relationship does not rest wholly in the control of the female. As males express love and as females perceive that love, relationship satisfaction goes up for both.
The greatest predictor alone (before the next best predictor was added to the regression) for relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males also was the greatest predictor among Caucasian females in these combinations of predictors of relationship satisfaction. This was the perception of partner’s empathy ($b = .703$). This suggests that relationship satisfaction among males and females may be attributed to feeling listened to and understood by their partner. Statistically speaking, a regression with empathy as the only independent variable tells us that empathy has a strong influence on relationship satisfaction. This information is not necessarily clinically significant in that couples employ more than one communication style at any given time. An individual communication style will never exist in a relationship exclusively. The statistical issue is informative but empathy needs to be taken in combination with other variables to make clinical sense. Communication skills training and couple’s therapy for Caucasians might do well to include a component of listening in combination with developing understanding between partners if the goal is relationship satisfaction.

When we look at the combination of predictors of relationship satisfaction, empathy’s influence is not as powerful. The $b$ value drops from .703 to .192 for Caucasian males and from .668 to .174 for Caucasian females. When the other variables are included in the stepwise multiple regression, the influence empathy has on relationship satisfaction is diminished and other variables can end up with more influence. The greatest predictor of relationship satisfaction within the combinations of predictors was the communication style of love ($b = .293$) for Caucasian males and the perception of partner’s love ($b = .257$) among Caucasian females. Therefore, if Caucasian
males include their partners in their lives, show love, and find their partners to be attractive and admirable, and their partners perceive this from them, relationship satisfaction will increase for each.

Once again the hostile conflict resolution type is statistically significant for both Caucasian males and females. This has already been discussed; however, in the current regression it was measured in combination with communication styles and still achieved statistical significance. This lends more support to the assertions made by researchers (e.g., Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Kroff, 1989; Heavey et al., 1993; Rands et al., 1981) that escalated, negative, and aversive conflict has a great impact toward reducing relationship satisfaction.

Males

Latino and Caucasian males share only two independent variables for the combinations that predicted the greatest relationship satisfaction. These are the communication styles of perception of partner's love and love. It seems as though love, both giving and receiving, is a statistically significant predictor of satisfaction for males of both ethnicities. While this shows that there are similarities between Caucasian and Latino males, there also seem to be a greater number of differences.

The Caucasian males had many more predictors of relationship satisfaction in the stepwise combinations than Latino males. This does not necessarily mean that Latino males are less complex; this could mean that the assessment instrument was based on mainstream Caucasian culture and did not assess factors that were relevant to the Latino male population.
**Females**

Caucasian and Latino females were similar on three independent variables within the combination that predicted the greatest relationship satisfaction. These include clear sending, perception of partner’s empathy, and love. It appears that being able to express one’s self and articulate concerns, feeling understood and listened to, finding one’s partner to be attractive and admirable, and including partners in one’s life lead to greater relationship satisfaction for both Latino and Caucasian females. Some marital enrichment programs and couple communication programs such as Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP; Markman, Stanley, & Blumberg, 2001) and Couple Communication (Miller, Miller, Nunnally, & Wackman, 1991) stress these points. The present research suggests that these programs may be helpful for both Latino and Caucasian females. The perception of partner’s empathy and perception of partner’s clear sending were statistically significant for Caucasian males, indicating that they, too, could benefit from such programs. However, these communication styles were not statistically significant for Latino males, indicating that the marital enrichment and couple communication programs may not be as effective for them. It seems that these types of programs could be considered to focus primarily on the factors that produce greater relationship satisfaction among females than males, except as the focus on the expression and perception of love and admiration.

These are relatively few similarities between Latino and Caucasian women, considering there were 20 different possible variables. Further research is needed to verify these findings and to study the effects of different aspects of communication styles.
and conflict resolution types as associated with relationship satisfaction in a multivariate model. Again, there was a difference in the number of statistically significant factors that predicted relationship satisfaction between Latino and Caucasian females. Four factors for the Latino females and eight factors for Caucasian females made up the combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types that predicted the greatest relationship satisfaction for each. As mentioned above, this may be due to the fact that the research upon which the RELATE was based came primarily from mainstream Caucasian participants and researchers.

Fourth Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Communication Style Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

_Latinos_

None of the communication styles alone significantly predicted relationship stability among Latino males. Only the controlled ("lack of control" may be a better way to understand this variable) communication style predicted relationship stability among Latino females. This was a negative relationship. It is interesting to note that, while the controlled communication style for Latino women predicted relationship stability, perceiving this communication style from their partners did not. In other words, feeling a lack of control over one's physical and mental capacities during a conflict predicts a reduction in relationship stability, but perception of partner's control or lack of control does not among Latino females. Do these women not expect control on the parts of their
partners but do expect themselves to be controlled?

Caucasians

Two communication styles are common between male and female Caucasians in predicting relationship stability. These are love (positive relationship) and the perception of one's partner as controlled (negative relationship). The results support Gottman's (1993) findings that suggested that in stable couples, husbands displayed more affection and wives demonstrated more interest in the relationship.

It appears that for both males and females, the more one perceives the other as controlled (lack of control may be a better description of this communication style; amount of control over one's physical and mental capacities during a conflict), the less stability will be experienced in the relationship. Perceiving a partner as tense and anxious appears to contribute to relationship instability among Caucasian males and females. This seems to support Gottman's (1994, 1999) findings that couples who become physiologically aroused during conflict are more likely to seek divorce.

Males

Three communication styles predicted relationship stability among Caucasian males, but none of the communication styles were statistically significant predictors of relationship stability among Latino males. Once again, one-size-fits-all overgeneralizations based on mainstream Caucasian samples may not be accurate when directly applied to Latinos.

Amatto and DeBoer (2001) suggested that long-term, mutually satisfying
relationships with others are made easier through the use of positive communication
skills. The present study cannot make this same assertion based on the results for the
Latino males. None of the 16 communication styles employed by Latino males achieved
statistical significance in predicting relationship stability. In fact, only three of the 16
communication styles among Caucasian males predicted relationship stability with
statistical significance. Of those three, only one (love) can be considered a positive
communication style because it predicts greater relationship stability. The other two—
perception of partner’s respect (or disrespect) and perception of partner as controlled (or
lack of control)—have a negative relationship and predict relationship instability.

**Females**

The only statistically significant communication style as a predictor of stability
among Latino females also is statistically significant among Caucasian females. Once
again, the results suggest that the controlled (lack of control) communication style is
statistically significant and has a negative relationship to relationship stability and
supports assertions by Gottman (1994, 1999). Different from females, not being in
control over one’s anxiety and physical and mental capacities as well as perceiving that
one’s partner is not in control of their own anxiety and physical and mental capacities are
two communication styles that are statistically significant in predicting a reduction of
relationship stability among Caucasian females. Caucasian females expect control and
therefore are distressed when they do not experience it from their partners.

There were more statistically significant communication styles as predictors of
relationship stability among Caucasian females than any other group of males or females
in this study. For the sake of Caucasian females, it seems that anger management and stress reduction for themselves and their partners would be a beneficial aspect to couples therapy and communication workshops. Several authors (Amatto & Rogers, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Leonard & Roberts, 1998) suggested that divorcing couples are more negative in their expression of emotion in marital conversations and respond to criticism defensively. Based on the results of the present research and the findings mentioned above, the lack of control over one's anxiety and physical and mental capacities and perceiving that one's partner is not in control of his own anxiety and physical and mental capacities may lead to divorce for Caucasian women.

Fifth Research Question: To What Degree Does Each Conflict Resolution Type Relative to the Others Predict Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

**Latinos**

The validating conflict resolution type is the only statistically significant predictor of relationship stability for both Latino males and females from this study. It seems as though males and females in this ethnic group are similar when it comes to the significance of conflict resolution and relationship stability. No research was found that discussed a validating conflict type among Latinos as a predictor of relationship stability. More research needs to be done to either confirm or refute these recent findings.

**Caucasians**

The hostile conflict resolution type is a statistically significant predictor of
relationship stability for both Caucasian males and females. None of the other types are statistically significant predictors for either. All types of conflict resolution were statistically significant predictors of satisfaction with the hostile type contributing more than any other to satisfaction among both males and females. This suggests that hostility is an important factor to consider in both relationship stability and satisfaction. There seem to be great similarities between males and females when considering conflict resolution types that predict relationship stability. This suggests that males and females might not be as different as previously thought in terms of conflict resolution types.

Gottman (1993) suggested more differences than similarities between men’s and women’s use of conflict resolution and its influence on relationship stability.

There is similarity between Latinos and Caucasians in that for both ethnicities, the males and females had similar results. The difference is seen in that what was statistically significant for one ethnicity was not statistically significant for the other. So it seems that males and females within the same ethnic group are similar but ethnic groups differ from each other on the factors of conflict resolution types as predictors of relationship stability.

The present research can only claim that the hostile conflict resolution type influences relationship stability with statistical significance. These findings support assertions made by Gottman (1994) that negative attributes of conflict have been associated with marital dissolution and are common in distressed marriages. Gottman (1993) also reported that couples with a hostile or hostile/detached style of conflict resolution behavior tended to be unstable.
Males

There are differences between Latino and Caucasian males when it comes to conflict resolution as a predictor of relationship stability. Validating is the only statistically significant conflict resolution type for Latino males and the hostile type is the only statistically significant one for Caucasian males. This is one more area that generalizations between ethnicities would not be effective to impose on either group. A study by Kagan et al. (1982) was the only research found that compared conflict resolution types between a Latino group and a Caucasian group, but it was not studied as a predictor of relationship stability. The authors suggested that Mexican Americans tend to be extremely avoidant of conflict when compared to Anglo Americans. The influence of the avoidant conflict resolution type cannot be compared between Caucasian and Latino males in the present study. The avoidant conflict resolution type did not achieve statistical significance for either Caucasian or Latino males (or females).

Females

For Latino females, the validating conflict resolution type significantly predicted relationship stability but not satisfaction, and the one that significantly predicted satisfaction (hostile) did not significantly predict stability. This suggests that conflict resolution types that predict stability do not necessarily predict satisfaction and vice versa, though one might think they would be very highly correlated. More research is needed to understand this relationship.

The findings for Caucasian women on this regression are similar to the findings for Latino women in the second research question looking at differences between the
hostile and volatile conflict resolution types. The hostile conflict resolution type is highly statistically significant and the volatile conflict resolution type is not statistically significant as a predictor. As mentioned before, hostile relationships are characterized by heated arguing, whereas heated arguing and then an even greater apology (making up) characterize volatile relationships. So once again the question arises: Why is it that heated arguing without apology is statistically significant and heated arguing followed by a sincere apology is not? One would think that apologizing would soften, but not eradicate, the negative effects of arguing and possibly influence relationship satisfaction to a statistically significant degree. It seems as though if one apologizes, the influence in predicting relationship satisfaction greatly diminished (from $b = -.411$ [hostile] to $b = .003$ [volatile]). Heated arguing (hostile) can be called a negative event in that it significantly reduces relationship stability. Apologizing can be considered a positive event in that its presence after a heated argument (volatile) reduces the significance of the negative influence of the argument on relationship stability. These findings seem to support the literature that suggests increased relationship stability when positive events outway negative events (Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff 1989; Russell-Chapin et al., 2001).

Sixth Research Question: Which Combination of Communication Styles and Conflict Resolution Types Predict Greater Relationship Stability Among Latino Males, Latino Females, Caucasian Males, and Caucasian Females?

Latinos

There were no similarities between Latino males and females on combinations of
independent variables as statistically significant predictors of relationship stability. This suggests that gender is an important factor to consider and further research is needed to understand these differences. No other research was found that considers these variables among Latinos as predictors of relationship stability. There were no similarities among Latino males and females when considering communication styles as predictors of relationship stability, either. The only similarity between Latino males and females when considering predictors of relationship stability is seen in conflict resolution types (see discussion of the fifth research question). It is interesting to note that when entered into a stepwise regression that includes communication styles, the validating conflict resolution type is no longer a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction among Latino women. The variables seem to have an effect upon each other and either weaken or strengthen each other’s influence on relationship satisfaction. According to the results in the present study, there are far more differences, overall, than similarities between Latino males and females when predicting relationship stability.

Caucasians

Caucasian males and females share the combination of hostile conflict resolution type and perceiving partner as controlled communication style as predictors of relationship stability. No other variables in the statistically significant combinations for each (male and female) were common to both groups. It is apparent that there are differences between males’ and females’ statistically significant combinations of predictors of relationship stability, and further research can explore these gender differences.
The hostile conflict resolution type was the only statistically significant type among Caucasian males and females (see discussion for the fifth research question) and it maintained its statistical significance when entered into the stepwise regression with communication styles. Of the two statistically significant communication styles that predicted reduced relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males and females, the perception of partner as controlled (lack of control) maintained significance when entered into the stepwise regression with conflict resolution types. It is interesting to note that the only predictors of relationship stability among the combinations that Caucasian males and females held in common were negatively related to relationship stability. The predictors with positive relationships were different between Caucasian males and females. This suggests that Caucasian males' and females' relationship stability decreases with common negative predictors (hostile conflict resolution and perception of partner as lacking control over physical and mental capacities) but they have differing predictors when it comes to increasing relationship stability.

Males

Although statistically significant predictions between communication styles and relationship stability were not found among Latino males, a statistically significant effect of two communication styles on relationship stability appeared in the stepwise model that included combinations of both communication styles and conflict resolution types. These findings demonstrate that it is important to study the effects of different aspects of communication styles and conflict resolution types in combination as associated with relationship stability in a multivariate model. In this stepwise regression there seemed to
be no similarities on statistically significant variables between Latino and Caucasian males. These differences demonstrate the need to be aware of and understand differences and similarities between ethnicities, and the ability of therapists to explore the dominant values and complexities of cultural identity as suggested by Walsh (2003).

Females

Latino and Caucasian females shared only one common variable (perception of partner’s love) within the combinations of independent variables that predicted the greatest relationship stability. It is interesting to note that when these variables were studied independently, they also shared only one style in common (the controlled [lack of control] communication style). However, it is not the same as that shared when combinations of variables are taken into consideration. Further research can focus on interactive effects and how or why significance is lost or gained when communication styles and conflict resolution types are independent or combined. The literature found on communication styles and conflict resolution types share lists of styles and types that are predictors of relationship stability, but they do not report on combinations studied together as in the present research. This may be a beneficial area to explore in the future. Combinations of communication styles and conflict resolution types are employed by couples within an individual confrontational episode and seem to produce different influences on stability depending on which combination is used and for different partners (Latino and Caucasian males and females).
Seventh Research Question: Is There a Significant Interactive Effect Across Latino Subgroups for Each of the Variables (Communication Style, Conflict Resolution Type, Relationship Satisfaction, Relationship Stability)?

To address this question properly, a larger sample of Latinos from various countries is required. The current sample did not have a sufficient number of participants in all Latino subgroups for this analysis.

Implications

This study was informed by systems theory. Interactions and perceptions are important in that one partner’s actions and perceptions will affect the other in recursive fashion. This theory provides a useful way to understand the results of this study. The present research supports assertions made by Lamanna and Reidman (2000) that in relationships in which one partner desires change and the other does not, sometimes, if just one partner begins to communicate more positively, a change will occur. This does not always promote the sought after change. However, relationship satisfaction for both partners in the relationship does not rest wholly in the control of one partner. Both have some responsibility in their level of satisfaction. Further, when both partners work at promoting relationship satisfaction, they still may likely have problems to work on. Similarly, there are interactive effects among variables, such as noncritical by itself is not as clear a predictor as noncritical with or without a context of love.
Practice

If couples are helped to understand their partners' preferred communication styles and conflict resolution types, receiving and expressing, they may have more influence and control over their relationship satisfaction and stability. Russell-Chapin et al. (2001) suggest that it is helpful if the therapist can assist the couple to recognize and understand each other's differing styles of conflict resolution. Matching the partner's communication styles and conflict resolution types may not be the best thing to do if they prefer receiving a different style or type than they employ. It is important for marriage and family therapists, in selecting interventions, to consider the differences in managing conflict shaped by gender (Mackey & O'Brien, 1998).

The present research suggests that relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males and females may be attributed in part to feeling listened to and understood by their partners. Communication skills training and couple's therapy might do well to include a component of listening and developing understanding between partners if the goal is relationship satisfaction. However, this style of communication was not found to be statistically significant among Latino males and, therefore, it may not be beneficial for therapists to teach listening skills to Latino males.

Not only are there differences between cultures on communication styles that predict relationship satisfaction but there are differences between genders as well. There is a risk of irrelevance if the differences between the sexes and ethnicities are neglected when attempting to explain human behavior as well as when using therapies with the goal of changing behavior (Francoeur & Taverner, 2000). Francoeur and Taverner go on to
suggest that people tend to view these differences not as simple diversity but as superior versus inferior or good versus bad.

Both Latino and Caucasian females in this study reported greater relationship satisfaction when they are able to express themselves and articulate concerns along with feeling understood and listened to, and finding their partners to be attractive and admirable as well as including them in their lives. Many marital enrichment programs and couple communication programs stress these points, which may be helpful for both Latino and Caucasian females. Caucasian males, too, could benefit from such programs in that the perception of their partners’ empathy and the perception of their partners’ clear sending were both important communication styles for Caucasian males. However, among Latino males, these communication styles were not statistically significant, indicating that the marital enrichment and couple communication programs may not be as effective for them. Rather, enhancing validation would be more appropriate for marital enrichment programs including Latino males.

These types of programs may focus primarily on the factors that produce greater relationship satisfaction among the mainstream culture. Therefore, Latino males who are not “successful” in this type of program may be incorrectly perceived as resistant to change. Relationship enhancement programs for Latino and Caucasian males and females would do better to focus on the love communication style. In other words, based on the present research, it might be helpful to focus on including one’s partner in one’s life, showing love, and finding the partner to be attractive and admirable, if the goal is to increase relationship satisfaction.
If a therapist tries to communicate in a way that the client’s culture does not recognize as typical, the therapist may be regarded as rather strange (Fine, 2001). The same can be said of the therapist’s interpretation of the couple’s communication with one another. If the therapist is not culturally aware, the therapist may incorrectly pathologize the couple and use interventions based on incorrect assumptions. For example, if a therapist tries to encourage a male Latino client to recognize the soothing efforts of his partner in an attempt to increase relationship satisfaction, he or she will likely not see the same success that is experienced among Caucasian males when they experience this communication style. While perceiving soothing efforts from one’s partner is a predictor of relationship satisfaction among Caucasian males in this study, it is not a predictor of relationship satisfaction among Latino males. Rather, helping Latino males validate their partners may increase their sense of satisfaction in the relationship.

We see that perceiving and expressing communication styles can affect relationship satisfaction. For both Latino and Caucasian males and females, expressing and perceiving positive communication styles predicted relationship satisfaction. Stinnett (1997) suggested that most people are happy when they are with other people who make them feel good about themselves.

Marioles and Hammer (1996) suggest that couples who are able to calmly discuss and exchange ideas are more satisfied in their marriages. While the present research cannot make the same claim, results do suggest that couples who perceive attacks from each other are less satisfied in their relationships. This supports other studies (e.g., Gottman, 1993, 1994; Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heavey et al., 1993) that report
negative communication reduces relationship satisfaction.

Using some communication styles promoted relationship satisfaction and stability while expressing other styles promoted relationship dissatisfaction and instability. The same is true for perceiving communication styles. While one does not have control over one’s partner, one does have control over one’s self and over one’s perceptions, which are influenced by nonverbals, history, attached meanings, and so forth. Satisfaction and stability can be influenced as one controls her or his own style of communication. The present research shows that the communication styles and conflict resolution types used by one partner and perceived by the other can influence the relationship satisfaction of both partners. For example, if Latino females include their partners in their lives, show love, find their partners to be attractive and admirable and their partners perceive this, both partners will be more likely to be satisfied with the relationship. Likewise, if Caucasian males express love and as females perceive that love, relationship satisfaction goes up for both. This supports Gottman’s (1994) findings that happy relationships share some common qualities, particularly the expression of positive emotions and affection.

Not being in control over one’s anxiety and physical and mental capacities and perceiving that one’s partner is not in control of their own anxiety and physical and mental capacities are two communication styles that are statistically significant in predicting a reduction of relationship stability among Caucasian females. It seems that anger management and stress reduction would be beneficial aspects to couples therapy and communication workshops and therapy for Caucasian females. More evidence from the present study indicates that men perceive diminished relationship stability when they
perceive that their partners are not in control of their own anxiety and physical and mental capacities. This also suggests that anger management and stress reduction would be beneficial aspects to couples therapy and communication workshops for females.

Research

There are common similarities and differences between Latinos and Caucasians, and males and females (Walsh, 2003). In some areas of this study, results were quite similar (most and least influential conflict resolution types); in other areas they were quite different (which combinations of independent variables predicted relationship satisfaction and stability). More research needs to be done to explore these similarities and differences.

Although statistically significant predictions among communication styles and relationship stability were not found among Latino males, a statistically significant effect of two communication styles on relationship stability appeared in the stepwise model that included combinations of both communication styles and conflict resolution types for Latino men, indicating further support to the importance of research using multivariate models. The literature on communication styles and conflict resolution types provide lists of predictors of relationship stability, but they do not report on combinations studied together, as in the present research. This may be a beneficial area to explore in the future.

The present research found that heated arguing (the hostile conflict resolution type) was an important predictor of reduced relationship satisfaction among Latino females. However heated arguing followed by sincere apology was not an important predictor of relationship satisfaction. This finding could be better understood with further
research on apologies as part of conflict resolution. There could be more involved in the increase of relationship satisfaction than outweighing negative events with positive ones.

The present study found that the validating conflict resolution type was the only statistically significant predictor of relationship stability for both Latino males and females. No research was found that discussed a validating conflict type among Latinos as a predictor of relationship stability. More research needs to be done to either confirm or refute these recent findings.

Differences between Latino and Caucasian males and females are a focus of this study. However, religion may be a confound to this study in that three fourths of the Latino subsample was Catholic and almost half of the Caucasian sample was LDS. When religious affiliation was entered as an independent variable in all the regressions from this study, it was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction or stability. It was not clinically significant due to low $b$ scores. The Latino subsample was not sufficient in size to control for religion in the analysis. The Caucasian LDS sample and non-LDS sample was sufficient in size and produced a few differences, but more similarities, on the regressions that included communication styles as predictors of relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. There also were similar results between the subsamples on the regressions that included conflict resolution types as predictors of relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. The statistical and clinical significance were similar on all conflict resolution type subscales in predicting relationship satisfaction and stability. It seems as though differences between the Latino and Caucasian subgroups is due to ethnicity rather than religion. However, controlling
for religion in a similar study may be beneficial.

Another potential confound for this study is the relationship status of the participating couples. Just over half of the couples were single and the remainder was married couples. When relationship status was entered as an independent variable in all the regressions from this study, it was not found to be a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction or stability.

Subsamples of the Latino and Caucasian samples were created to look at the potential confounding variable of relationship status on relationship satisfaction and relationship stability. The single and married Latino subsamples were similar to each other. The same was found for the Caucasian single and married subsamples when compared to each other.

A potential confound for this study, suggested in a review of premarital literature by Cate, Levin, & Richmond (2002), is that relationship stability is not very clearly identified in premarital couples. Additionally, cohabiters who do not enter into marriages within a few years experience high levels of instability, as found in Brown's (2003) study using data from the National Survey of Families and Households. Performing the current study on premarital couples compared to married couples may be interesting and may point out similarities and differences that could be beneficial in working with couples as they transition into marriages.

Policy

Principle One of the AAMFT Code of Ethics (2001) states: "Marriage and family therapists advance the welfare of families and individuals. They respect the rights of
those persons seeking their assistance, and make reasonable efforts to ensure that their services are used appropriately.” How can we be sure we are advancing the welfare of Latino couples, families, and individuals if we base interventions and diagnoses upon U.S. mainstream culture? To be more sure that we are actually helping clients rather than harming them, we must increase cultural competence in the field. Part of this may include generating more research and another part could entail informing therapists through educational requirements. The present study is an attempt to add to this body of literature.

This study helps to provide more culturally sensitive data helpful to family therapists, especially on the topics of communication and conflict resolution and their influence on relationship satisfaction and stability among the Latino American population. An understanding of the Latino culture can help therapists recognize what is normal and avoid inaccurate diagnostic labels. Anglo American therapists often pathologize Latino closeness as enmeshment (Falicov, 1998). “Marriage and family therapists do not diagnose, treat, or advise on problems outside the recognized boundaries of their competencies” (AAMFT, 2001, principle III.11). Marriage and family therapists with greater multicultural training can be more competent and effective community change agents (Ponterotto & Pederson, 1993).

As mentioned in principle I.1 of the AAMFT Code of Ethics (2001), “Marriage and family therapists provide professional assistance to persons without discrimination....” This includes the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin, among others. In order to more competently serve the needs of a diverse clientele we must be aware of differences and similarities between the mainstream culture and
majority populations (Latino for this study). The results of the present study produced evidence toward more differences than similarities among Latinos, Caucasians, males, and females. Being aware of these differences and similarities and increasing cultural competence may add to the reduction of discrimination in the field of marriage and family therapy.

The third principle of the AAMFT Code of Ethics (2001) states, "Marriage and family therapists maintain high standards of professional competence and integrity." This requires that

While developing new skills in specialty areas, marriage and family therapists take steps to ensure the competence of their work and to protect clients from possible harm. Marriage and family therapists practice in specialty areas new to them only after appropriate education, training, or supervised experience. (AAMFT, 2001, principle III.7)

It is dangerous to assume that one size fits all in therapy. According to the present study, there are differences among Latinos, Caucasians, males, and females regarding communication styles and conflict resolution types that predict relationship satisfaction and stability. Therapists must stay abreast of the literature to ensure the cultural competence of their work. The present research indicates that without an understanding of differences between cultures, a therapist may focus on issues that seem relevant in the mainstream culture when they may not be relevant in the Latino culture. This needs to be recognized in policy as important when conducting therapy with families, couples, and individuals of an ethnicity different from that of the therapist.
Limitations

The sample sizes for the various Latino groups (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Central American, South American, North American [U.S.], and other) was not sufficient to conduct the proper statistical procedures for the final research question. While the present sample was not sufficient to explore differences among subgroups of the Latinos, we must take note, as mentioned by Ponterotto and Pederson (1993), that there are many subcultures within culture. Further research with Latinos of various subgroups is needed to promote cultural competence.

Short-term maturation such as boredom may affect scores on the RELATE due to the length of the questionnaire (over 270 questions). RELATE is a self-report measure that will eventually be shared with a partner. Some people may choose a conflict resolution style as their own because it may appear to be a more socially acceptable style, or the participant may want to be perceived as similar to their partner and mark the conflict resolution type they anticipate their partner will choose or prefer. These issues may affect scores on the variables. Other variables that were not included in the scope of the present study may affect relationship satisfaction and relationship stability among Latinos and Caucasian males and females more so than communication styles and conflict resolution types. Some communication styles not studied in the present research may serve as mediating variables such as nonverbals (e.g., eye contact, tone of voice, hand gestures, physical contact, facial expression, etc.).

The sample was self-selected and care must be exercised in generalizing the ability to more confidently generalize the findings to the U.S. population in general.
Religion was not controlled in the present study. Three quarters of the Latino sample were Catholic and almost half of the Caucasian sample was Latter-day Saints. Therefore, there may be some bias in the scores related to religious tenets or practices.

The sample consists of single and married couples. This is a potential confound in that the dynamics between the two groups can be quite different. Cate, Levin, and Richmond. (2002) pointed out that particular difficulty may come from clarifying commitment to a relationship in a premarital couple.

RELATE is a well-translated instrument (Carroll et al., 2001). However, even though the instrument was translated well, it was based on research conducted primarily with the mainstream Caucasian population by Caucasian researchers. Extensive research into the Latino culture is still needed, particularly on the factors of communication styles and conflict resolution as predictors of relationship satisfaction and stability. After this research has been conducted, assessment instruments that assess the factors most relevant to Latinos can be created. In the present study, Latinos had fewer variables that achieved statistical significance compared to the Caucasians. As mentioned above, this may be due to the fact that the research upon which the RELATE was biased. Perhaps there are greater predictors of relationship stability outside the realm of communication and conflict resolution among Latinos. The lack of statistical significance among predictors of relationship satisfaction and stability among Latinos also may be due to the small sample size.
Conclusions

The importance of examining ethnic differences in communication appears to be escalating, especially as our nation becomes more diverse and interethnic relations are perceived as problematic (Henry, 1990). It seems clear from the results of this study that expressed or perceived communication styles and conflict resolution types have differing effects on relationship satisfaction and relationship stability for Latino and Caucasian males and females. Although love, in one form or the other, was important for all groups, other variables had varying effects. The results of this study suggest that culturally competent therapists may want to adjust the focus of their attention on communication skills that are most important to each group, avoiding interventions that may not fit cultural and gender differences among their clients. These results also suggest that research on mediating factors and therapy techniques that are most effective is needed.
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RELATE
RELATIOnship Evaluation
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CONFIDENTIAL!! Do NOT look at your partner's answers unless you have received permission to do so.

The RELATIOnship Evaluation, or RELATE, is designed to help individuals and couples evaluate the quality of a current premarital or marital relationship. It is also helpful for individuals not in a relationship who will be able to see how they compare to others in relationships. RELATE consists of over 250 questions about you, your partner, your family, and your relationship. Most people complete RELATE in 1-1½ hours.

Because of legal reporting requirements, no one under 18 years of age is to take RELATE.

The information you provide will be used to create summary scores comparing you and your partner (if any) in a number of areas. You will be sent a full report of your results. If you are concerned that your partner will see your answers to items you are not yet willing to share, do not answer those items. You should understand, however, that if you skip questions, the results on the report we send you may not be totally accurate.

The information will also be included in a database that will be used to do research on predicting marital quality from earlier premarital or marital factors. Strict confidentiality will be maintained. All identifying references such as your name will be removed and replaced by control numbers. Only the master file, which is accessible only to Dr. Thomas B. Holman, will contain your name for longitudinal data matching purposes.

You may quit at any time before submitting your answers for scoring, and return RELATE to the Marriage Study Consortium office for a full refund. You may withdraw from the research component at any time without penalty.

While there are no known risks involved in completing RELATE, a few of the questions may trigger some discomforting memories.

The return of this questionnaire is your consent for the Center for Studies of the Family to produce the RELATE report and send it to you or your family professional. We will return these questionnaires to you and your partner, each in a separate, sealed envelope. Furthermore, the return of this questionnaire is your consent to use the information provided for research, and to contact the person whose name, address, and phone number you provide below to get information on where you are living and to contact you for
research purposes. If you do not want to be part of the longitudinal study, do not fill in the contact or tracking information requested on pages 2 and 3.

If you have inquiries about this questionnaire, you may contact Dr. Thomas B. Holman at the address listed on the last page or by phone at 801-378-6704.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research and Creative Activities at Brigham Young University by phone at 801-378-3841.
Instructions For Completing RELATE:

Complete RELATE alone, and do not talk to your partner about the questions until after you have turned in both questionnaires.

RELATE is not a test. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers--only "your" answers.

Giving "rosy" or "ideal" answers will make the report you receive back much less useful or meaningful. Therefore, please be totally honest as you answer these questions.

Today's date?

Your birth date?

ZIP Code?

Resident of which country?

Citizen of which country?

D About your religious orientation.
31 Is spirituality an important part of your life?
  O Never
  O Rarely
  O Sometimes
  O Often
  O Very Often

32 Do you pray (commune with a higher power)?
  O Never
  O Rarely
  O Sometimes
  O Often
  O Very Often

F Please provide the following information about yourself:
68 You are: O Male O Female

69 Your sexual preference is:
  O Heterosexual (opposite sex).
  O Bisexual (either sex).
  O Homosexual (same sex).
70 How much education have you completed?
- Less than high school
- High school equivalency (GED)
- High school diploma
- Some college, currently enrolled
- Some college, not currently enrolled
- Associate’s degree
- Bachelor’s degree
- Graduate or professional degree, not completed
- Graduate or professional degree, completed

71 Your current personal yearly gross income before taxes and deductions:
- None
- Under $5,000
- $5,000-$14,999
- $15,000-$24,999
- $25,000-$29,999
- $30,000-$39,999
- $40,000-$49,999
- $50,000-$74,999
- $75,000-$100,000
- Over $100,000

72 Your race or ethnic group is:
- African (Black)
- Asian
- Caucasian
- American Indian
- Latino (Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.)
- Mixed / Biracial
- Other

73 Your religious affiliation is:
- Catholic
- Protestant (Methodist, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Baptist, etc.)
- Jewish
- Islamic
- Latter-day Saint (Mormon)
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Sikh
- Other
- None
A Please answer the following about your relationship
130 Which best describes your current marital status? (Choose only one)
O Single, never married
O Married, but separated
O Cohabiting, living with your partner in an intimate relationship.
O Divorced
O Remarried.
O Married, first marriage.
O Widowed.

131 How many times have you been divorced?
O Never
O Once
O Twice
O Three or more times

132 Which best describes your current dating status? (Choose only one)
O Not dating at all
O Engaged, or committed to marry
O Casual / Occasional dating
O Doesn't apply (married)
O In a serious or steady relationship

B Please answer the following questions about your current relationship
133 What is your relationship to the person about whom you will answer the
"partner" questions below?
O I am casually/occasionally dating her/him
O I am in a serious or steady dating relationship with her/him.
O I am engaged or committed to marriage to her/him.
O I am married to her/him.
O We are friends or classmates.

134 How long have you and your partner been dating (If married, how long have
you and your partner been married)?
O 0 to 3 months.  O 3 to 5 years.
O 4 to 6 months.  O 6 to 10 years.
O 7 to 12 months. O 11 to 20 years.
O 1 to 2 years. O More than 20 years.

1 In your relationship, how satisfied are you with the following?
(Answer choices: Very Dissatisfied, Dissatisfied, Neutral, Satisfied, Very Satisfied)
179 The physical intimacy you experience
180 The love you experience
J How are you in your relationship?
(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)
186 I discuss my personal problems with my partner
187 I include my partner in my life
188 When I talk to my partner I can say what I want in a clear manner
189 I understand my partner's feelings
190 I find my partner physically attractive
191 I struggle to find words to express myself to my partner
192 I am able to listen to my partner in an understanding way
193 I admire my partner
194 I sit down with my partner and just talk things over
195 I show a lot of love toward my partner
196 I talk over pleasant things that happen during the day when I am with my partner
197 In most matters, I understand what my partner is trying to say

K How are you when the two of you have a conflict?
(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)
198 I don't censor my complaints at all. I really let my partner have it full force
199 I have no respect for my partner when we are discussing an issue
200 I think, “It's best to withdraw to avoid a big fight”
201 Whenever I have a conflict with my partner, I feel physically tense and anxious, and I don't think clearly
202 When I am in an argument, I recognize when I am overwhelmed and then make a deliberate effort to calm myself down
203 I use a tactless choice of words when I complain
204 When I get upset I can see glaring faults in my partner’s personality
205 I think that withdrawing is the best solution
206 I feel physically tired or drained after I have an argument with my partner
207 While in an argument, I recognize when my partner is overwhelmed and then make a deliberate effort to calm him/her down.
208 There’s no stopping me once I get started complaining
209 When my partner complains, I feel that I have to “ward off” these attacks
210 I don’t want to fan the flames of conflict, so I just sit back and wait
211 Whenever we have a conflict, the feelings I have are overwhelming
212 I’ve found that during an intense argument it is better to take a break, calm down, then return and discuss later.
213 I feel unfairly attacked when my partner is being negative
214 I withdraw to try to calm down
Please answer the following about how your partner is in your relationship?

(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)

215 My partner discusses his/her personal problems with me
216 My partner includes me in his or her life
217 My partner can say what he/she wants to say in a clear manner
218 My partner understands my feelings
219 My partner finds me physically attractive
220 My partner struggles to find words to express him/herself to me
221 My partner is able to listen to me in an understanding way
222 My partner admires me
223 My partner sits down with me just to talk things over
224 My partner shows a lot of love toward me
225 My partner talks over pleasant things that happen during the day with me
226 In most matters, my partner understands what I am trying to say

How is your partner when the two of you have a conflict?

(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)

227 My partner doesn’t censor his or her complaints at all. She or he really lets me have it full force
228 My partner has no respect for me when we are discussing an issue
229 My partner thinks, “It's best to withdraw to avoid a big fight”
230 Whenever my partner has a conflict with me, he/she acts physically tense and anxious, and can’t seem to think clearly
231 While in an argument, my partner recognize when he/she is overwhelmed and then makes a deliberate effort to calm down
232 My partner uses a tactless choice of words when she or he complains
233 When my partner get upset, my partner acts like there are glaring faults in my personality
234 My partner thinks that withdrawing is the best solution
235 My partner feel physically tired or drained after he/she has an argument with me
236 While in an argument, my partner recognize when I am overwhelmed and then make a deliberate effort to calm me down.
237 There’s no stopping my partner once he/she gets started complaining
238 When I complain, my partner acts like he or she has to “ward off” my attacks
239 My partner doesn’t want to fan the flames of conflict, so he or she just sits back and waits
240 Whenever we have a conflict, my partner seems overwhelming
241 During an intense argument, my partner a break, calms down, then returns and discusses it later.
242 My partner acts like he/she is being unfairly attacked when I am being negative
243 My partner withdraws to try to calm down
Please answer the following questions about your relationship:
(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)

248 How often have you thought your relationship (or marriage) might be in trouble?

249 How often have you and your partner discussed ending your relationship (or marriage)?

250 How often have you broken up or separated and then gotten back together?

Below are descriptions of four different ways couples handle conflict in their relationships. We would like to see how often each way describes how you and your partner deal with conflict in your relationship.
(Answer choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often)

266 In our relationship, conflicts may be fought on a grand scale, and that is okay, since our making up is even grander. We have volcanic arguments, but they are just a small part of a warm and loving relationship. Although we argue, we are still able to resolve our differences. In fact, our passion and zest for fighting actually leads to a better relationship with a lot of making up, laughing, and affection.

267 In our relationship, conflict is minimized. We think it is better to “agree to disagree” rather than end up in discussions that will result in a deadlock. We don't think there is much to be gained from getting openly angry with each other. In fact, a lot of talking about disagreements seems to make matters worse. We feel that if you just relax about problems, they will have a way of working themselves out.

268 In our relationship, when we are having a conflict we let each other know the other’s opinions are valued and their emotions valid, even if we disagree with each other. Even when discussing a hot topic we display a lot of self-control and are calm. When fighting, we spend a lot of time validating each other as well as trying to persuade our partner or trying to find a compromise.

269 We argue often and hotly. There are a lot of insults back and forth, name calling, put-downs, and sarcasm. We don't really listen to what the other is saying, nor do we look at each other very much. One or the other of us can be quite detached and emotionally uninvolved, even though there may be brief episodes of attack and defensiveness. There are clearly more negatives than positives in our way of handling conflicts.
La evaluación de relaciones interpersonales, mejor conocida como RELATE, está diseñada para ayudar a individuos y parejas a evaluar la calidad de sus relaciones prematrimoniales o matrimoniales. Esta evaluación es útil también para aquellas personas que no se encuentran en una relación, para evaluar cómo ellas se comparan con otras personas en sus relaciones interpersonales. RELATE consiste de más de 250 preguntas acerca de Ud., su pareja y su familia. La mayoría de las personas tarda de 1 hora a 1 hora y media para completar RELATE.

Por a causa de restricciones legales, ningún menor de edad (menor de 18 años) puede completar RELATE.

La información que Ud. proveerá será usada para crear un resumen del total de puntos obtenido donde se compara a Ud. y a su pareja (si la tiene) en un número de áreas. Se le enviará a Ud. un reporte completo de los resultados. Ninguna información confidencial que Ud. provea será incluida en este reporte, excepto como parte del total de puntos obtenido. Si le preocupa que su pareja vea las respuestas de las preguntas que no Ud. está dispuesto(a) a compartir, no conteste esas preguntas. Debe entender, sin embargo, que si no contesta algunas preguntas, los resultados en el reporte que le enviaremos no serán del todo precisos.

La información obtenida también se usará para propósitos de investigación en el campo de las relaciones interpersonales. Se mantendrá estricta confidencialidad. Todas las referencias a su identidad, tales como su nombre, serán reemplazadas por números de control. Solo el archivo maestro, del cual solo tendrá acceso el Dr. Thomas Holman, contendrá su nombre para comparar información longitudinal.

Si Ud. no desea continuar contestando RELATE antes de devolver el cuestionario para poder obtener el resumen del total de puntos obtenido, puede devolverlo a la oficina de Estudios del Matrimonio para recibir un reembolso completo. Ud. puede dejar de ser parte de nuestra investigación en cualquier momento y sin ninguna multa.

Aunque no se conoce que el completar RELATE tenga algún riesgo, algunas preguntas pueden traerle malos recuerdos.

Al completar y entregar este cuestionario Ud. da consentimiento para lo siguiente: 1) para que el Centro de Estudios de la Familia produzca el reporte RELATE y lo envíe a Ud. 0 a
su consejero familiar, 2) para usar la información provista en la investigación y 3) para contactar a la persona cuyo nombre, dirección y número de teléfono aparece abajo, para obtener información de su lugar de residencia y contactarla para propósitos de investigación. Si no desea formar parte del estudio longitudinal, no llene la información en la página siguiente.

Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de este cuestionario, puede contactar al Dr. Thomas B. Holman en la dirección que aparece en la última página o a al siguiente número telefónico 801-378-6704.

Ud. también puede contactar la Oficina de Investigación de la Universidad Brigham Young al número telefónico 801-378-3841.
Instrucciones para completar RELATE

Complete RELATE a solas, y no hable con su pareja acerca de las preguntas antes de que hayan devuelto ambos cuestionarios.

RELATE no es un examen. No hay respuestas "correctas" o "incorrectas"--solamente son "sus" respuestas.

Dar respuestas que no son honestas hará que el reporte que Ud. reciba sea menos útil o significativo. Por lo tanto, por favor sea totalmente honesto al contestar estas preguntas.

¿Fecha en que completa el cuestionario RELATE?
¿La fecha de nacimiento del participante?

Código postal (5 digitos) del participante, si vive en los Estados Unidos.

¿De qué país es ciudadano?

¿En qué país vive actualmente?

D Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas acerca de su afiliación religiosa.
31 ¿Es la espiritualidad una parte importante de su vida?
O Nunca
O Raramente
O Algunas veces
O A menudo
O Muy a menudo

32 ¿Ora Ud. (reza, o se comunica con un poder superior)?
O Nunca
O Raramente
O Algunas veces
O A menudo
O Muy a menudo

F Por favor de la siguiente informacion acerca de Ud.
68 Ud. es:
O hombre
O mujer

69 Su preferencia sexual es:
O Heterosexual (sexo opuesto)
O Bisexual (ambos sexos)
O Homosexual (mismo sexo)
70 ¿Cuánta educación formal ha recibido?
O Ha asistido a la universidad, actualmente no está matriculado(a).
O Ha asistido a la universidad, actualmente está matriculado(a).
O Bachillerato universitario (también conocido como licenciatura)
O Titulo profesional o de post-grado, sin completar.
O Titulo profesional o de post-grado, completo.

71 Su ingreso bruto anual (antes de impuestos y deducciones) es:
O Ninguno
O Menos de $5,000
O Entre $5,000 y $14,999
O Entre $15,000 y $24,999
O Entre $25,000 y $29,999
O Entre $30,000 y $39,999
O Entre $40,000 y $49,999
O Entre $50,000 y $74,999
O Entre $75,000 y $100,000
O Más de $100,000

72 Ud. pertenece al siguiente grupo racial:
O Negro
O Asiático
O Blanco
O Indio americano
O Hispano (mexicano, puertorriqueño, cubano, etc.)
O Mixto/birracial
O Otro

73 Su religión es la siguiente:
O Catolicismo
O Protestantismo
O Judaísmo
O Islamismo
O Iglesia de Jesucristo de los Santos de los Últimos Días (Mormonismo)
O Budismo
O Hinduísmo
O Sikh
O Otra
O Ninguna
130 ¿Cuál de las siguientes alternativas describe mejor su estado civil actual?
(Escoja sólo una)
- Soltero(a), nunca he estado casado
- En unión libre, viviendo con mi pareja en una relación íntima.
- Casado(a), primer matrimonio
- Casado(a), pero separado(a)
- Divorciado(a)
- Casado(a) de nuevo
- Viudo(a)

131 ¿Cuál de las siguientes alternativas describe mejor su estado actual—en cuanto a su relación (Escoja sólo una)?
- Nunca salgo en pareja
- Casualmente/ocasionalmente salgo en pareja
- Estoy en una relación seria
- Estoy comprometido(a) para contraer matrimonio
- No se aplica (estoy casado(a)

132 ¿Cuántas veces se ha divorciado?
- Ninguna
- Una vez
- Tres veces
- Mas

133 ¿Cuál es su relación con la persona que tiene en mente al contestar las preguntas siguientes referentes a su "pareja"?
- Casualmente/ocasionalmente salgo con él/ella.
- Estoy en una relación seria con él/ella.
- Estoy comprometido(a) con él/ella.
- Estoy casado(a) con él/ella.
- Somos amigos o compañeros(as) de clase.

134 ¿Por cuánto tiempo Ud. y su pareja han salido juntos como pareja? Si están casados, por cuánto tiempo han estado casados?
- De 0 a 3 meses
- Mas de 3 meses y menos de 6
- Mas de 6 meses pero menos de 2
- De 1 a 2 años
- De 3 a 5 años
- De 6 a 10 años
O De 11 a 20 años
O Mas de 20 años

I En su relación, que tan satisfecho(a) está con lo siguiente?
(Respuestas: Muy insatisfecho(a), Insatisfecho(a), Neutral, Satisfecho(a), Muy satisfecho(a))
179 La intimidad física que Ud. experimenta
180 El amor que siente
181 Como resuelven los problemas
182 La igualdad en su relación
183 La cantidad de tiempo que pasan juntos
184 La calidad de la comunicación.
185 En términos generales

J Por favor conteste lo siguiente acerca de su situación actual en su relación.
(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)
186 Hablo acerca de mis problemas personales con mi pareja
187 Incluyo a mi pareja en mi vida
188 Cuando hablo con mi pareja puedo decir lo que quiera en una manera clara
189 Entiendo los sentimientos de mi pareja
190 Encuentro a mi pareja físicamente atractivo(a)
191 Me cuesta encontrar palabras para expresarme con mi pareja
192 Soy capaz de escuchar a mi pareja en una manera comprensiva
193 Admiro a mi pareja
194 Mi pareja y yo nos sentamos y simplemente hablamos de muchas cosas
195 Demuestro mucho amor a mi pareja
196 Hablo acerca de cosas agradables que me han pasado durante el día cuando estoy con mi pareja
197 En la mayoría de las cosas, entiendo lo que mi pareja trata de decirme

K Por favor conteste lo siguiente acerca de cómo actúa Ud. cuando tiene un problema con su pareja.
(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)
198 No me reprim. No importa cómo, realmente le digo lo que pienso a mi pareja
199 No tengo respeto por mi pareja cuando estamos hablando acerca de un tema
200 Pienso que “es mejor retirarse para evitar un gran pleito”
201 Cada vez que tengo un problema con mi pareja, me siento físicamente tenso(a) y ansioso(a) y no pienso claramente.
202 Cuando estoy discutiendo, reconozco cuando estoy abrumado(a) y entonces me esfuerzo por calmarme
203 No tengo tacto al escoger las palabras cuando me quejo
204 Cuando me enfado, veo grandes defectos en la personalidad de mi pareja
205 Pienso que evitar un pleito es la mejor solución
206 Me siento físicamente cansado(a) a exhausto(a) después de que discuto con mi pareja
En medio de una discusión, reconozco cuando mi pareja está abrumado(a) y entonces me esfuerzo por calmarlo(a).

Una vez que empiezo a quejarme, nadie me puede parar.

Cuando mi pareja se queja de mí, siento que tengo que protegerme de esos ataques.

No quiero echarle más leña al fuego, así que solo me siento y espero.

Cada vez que tenemos un problema, los sentimientos que tengo son abrumadores.

He encontrado que durante una discusión intensa es mayor darse un poco de tiempo, calmarse y después hablar acerca del asunto otra vez.

Cuando mi pareja se negativa, siento que me ataca injustamente.

Me retiro para tartar de calmarme.

Por favor conteste lo siguiente acerca de su pareja en su relación.

(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)

Mi pareja habla acerca de sus problemas personales con migo.

Mi pareja me incluye en su vida.

Mi pareja puede decir lo que quiera de una manera clara.

Mi pareja entiende mis sentimientos.

Mi pareja me encuentra físicamente atractivo(a).

A mi pareja le cuesta encontrar palabras para expresarse con migo.

Mi pareja es capaz de escucharme en una manera comprensiva.

Mi pareja me admira.

Mi pareja sesiente conmigo simplemente para hablar de muchas cosas.

Mi pareja me demuestra mucho amor.

Mi pareja me habla acerca de cosas agradables que le han pasado durante el día.

En la mayoría de las cosas, mi pareja entiende lo que trato de decirle.

Por favor conteste lo siguiente acerca de cómo es su pareja cuando Uds. tienen un problema.

(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)

Mi pareja no se reprime. No importa cómo, realmente me dece todo lo que piensa.

Mi pareja no me tiene respeto cuando estamos hablando acerca de un tema.

Mi pareja parece pensar, “es mejor retirarse para evitar un gran pleito”.

Cada vez que mi pareja tiene un problema con migo, él/ella se siente físicamente tenso(a) y ansioso(a) y no piensa claramente.

Durante una discusión, mi pareja reconoce cuando está abrumado(a) y entonces se esfuerza en calmarse.

Mi pareja no tiene tacto al escoger las palabras cuando se queja.

Cuando mi pareja se enfada actúa como si you tuviera grandes defectos en mi personalidad.

Mi pareja piensa que evitar un problema es la mejor solución.

Mi pareja actúa físicamente cansado(a) a exhausto(a) cuando discute con migo.

En medio de una discusión, mi pareja reconoce cuando estoy abrumado(a) y entonces se esfuerza por calmarse.

Una vez que pareja empiez a quejarse, nadie lo(a) puede parar.
238 Cuando me quejo, mi pareja siente que se tiene que resguardar de esos ataques
239 Mi pareja no quiere echar más leña al fuego, así que solo se sienta y espera
240 Cada vez que tenemos un problema, mi pareja parece estar abrumado(a)
241 Durante una discusión intensa, mi pareja se da un poco de tiempo, se calma y
   después habla del asunto contigo
242 Cuando soy negativo(a), mi pareja actúa como si lo estuviera actuando injustamente
243 Mi pareja se retira para tartar de calmarse

P Por favor conteste las siguientes preguntas acerca de su relación
(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)
248 ¿Qué tan a menudo ha pensado Ud. Que su relación (o matrimonio) podría estar en
   peligro?
249 ¿Qué tan a menudo han discutido Ud. Y su pareja terminar su relación (o
   matrimonio)?
250 ¿Qué tan a menudo han roto su relación, se han separado y después reconciliado?

S A continuacion hay descripciones de como cuatro parejas diferentes resuelven los
   problemas de sus relaciones. Nos gustaria saber que tan a menudo cada una de estas
   maneras describe la manera en que Ud. y su pareja resuelven problemas en su
   relacion.
(Respuestas: Nunca, Raramente, Algunas veces, A menudo, Muy a menudo)
266 En nuestra relación, los problemas pueden escalar muchísimo, lo cual esta bien, ya
   que nuestras reconciliaciones son aun mayores. Tenemos grandes pleitos, pero estos
   pleitos son solamente una pequeña parte de una relación calurosa y amorosa.
   Aunque peleamos, somos capaces de resolver nuestras diferencias. De hecho,
   nuestra pasión y energía al pelear nos lleva a tener una mejor relación debido a las
   tantas reconciliaciones, risas y afecto.
267 En nuestra relación, evitamos los problemas al máximo. Pensamos que es major
   aceptar que hay puntos en los que nunca estaremos de acuerdo, en vez de terminar
   en un desacuerdo dificil de superar. No creemos que se gane nada al estar
   abiertamente enojados el uno con el otro. De hecho, hablar mucho acerca de las
   cosas en las que no estamos de acuerdo empeora las cosas. Sentimos que si dejamos
   de pensar en nuestros problemas, ellos se resolverán por sólo solos.
268 En nuestra relación, cuando tenemos algun problema, nos expresamos el uno al otro
   que nuestras opiniones son valoradas y nuestras emociones son validas, aunque
   estemos en desacuerdo con ellas. Aunque estemos discutiendo un tema dificil,
   demostramos un gran autocontrol y calma. Cuando discutimos, invertimos mucho
   tiempo demostrando el respeto que tenemos por las opiniones del otro, tratando de
   persuadir a nuestra pareja, o tratando de llegar a un acuerdo.
269 Nosotros peleamos a menudo y muy fuerte. Hay muchos insultos, apodos,
   humillaciones y sarcasmo. Relamente no escuchamos lo que el otro está diciendo, ni
   tampoco nos miramos mucho. Tanto mi pareja como yo podemos apartarnos y
   distanciarnos emocionalmente, aunque pueden haber pequeños episodios de ataques
y actitudes defensivas. Claramente hay más cosas negativas que positivas en nuestra realción.

272 ¿Por lo general, ¿qué idioma(s) lee y habla usted?
O Solo español
O Español major que inglés
O Los dos por igual
O Ingles major que español
O solo inglés

277 ¿Dónde nació Ud.?
O Mexico
O Cuba
O Puerto Rico
O America Central
O Suramerica
O Estados Unidos
O España
O Otro
O No sé

285 ¿Por cuanto tiempo ha residido en los Estados Unidos?
O Toda mi vida
O Menos de 1 año
O Mas de 1 año pero menos de 3
O Mas de 3 años pero menos de 3
O Mas de 1 años pero menos de 5
O Mas de 5 años pero menos de 10
O Mas de 10 años pero menos de 20
O Mas de 20 años pero menos de 30
O Mas de 30 años