Reaction to revealed potential conflict among engaged couples
by Jon Koll

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SCIENCE in Home Economics (Family Relations Option)
Montana State University
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Abstract:
The purposes of this study were to: (1) identify how accurately a sample of engaged couples perceived their partners' opinion in relation to various common marital conflict areas, and, (2) to identify the reaction of these couples to revealed potential conflict.

Two questionnaires were completed by 20 engaged couples. The first questionnaire was the Schulman Test of Communication. This questionnaire was used to classify the couples according to the accuracy with which the partners perceived each other in relation to specific conflict areas. Six categories were devised to represent different degrees of accuracy of perception and amount of potential conflict. The perceptual categories were idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic.

Each of these categories was further subdivided according to the amount of potential conflict, that is, high disagreement or low disagreement.

After completing the Schulman questionnaire each couple's respective areas of potential conflict were presented to them. Two weeks later a second questionnaire was administered to the couples. This questionnaire was used to ascertain the amount of potential conflict remaining in the couples' relationships.

Five categories were devised to represent the amount of remaining potential conflict. These were: (1) no or almost no remaining potential conflict; (2) slight remaining potential conflict; (3) moderate remaining potential conflict; (4) high remaining potential conflict; and (5) very high remaining potential conflict.

According to the couples' responses on the Schulman questionnaire 21 % of the women and 46% of the men were classified as realistic in their perception of their partners. Sixty-three percent of the women and 38% of the men were classified as idealistic, and 17% of both men and women were classified as pessimistic.

The results of the second questionnaire were as follows. Seventy-five percent of the couples were in the remaining potential conflict categories of no or almost no, or slight remaining potential conflict. The remaining 25% of the couples were in the moderate remaining potential conflict category.

The results of this study suggest that regardless of the initial classification of couples as idealistic, realistic or pessimistic, couples utilized information provided for them about their potential conflicts to resolve these conflicts.

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to: (1) identify how accurately a sample of engaged couples perceived their partners' opinion in relation to various common marital conflict areas, and, (2) to identify the reaction of these couples to revealed potential conflict.

Two questionnaires were completed by 20 engaged couples. The first questionnaire was the Schulman Test of Communication. This questionnaire was used to classify the couples according to the accuracy with which the partners perceived each other in relation to specific conflict areas. Six categories were devised to represent different degrees of accuracy of perception and amount of potential conflict. The perceptual categories were idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic. Each of these categories was further subdivided according to the amount of potential conflict, that is, high disagreement or low disagreement.

After completing the Schulman questionnaire each couple's respective areas of potential conflict were presented to them. Two weeks later a second questionnaire was administered to the couples. This questionnaire was used to ascertain the amount of potential conflict remaining in the couples' relationships. Five categories were devised to represent the amount of remaining potential conflict. These were: (1) no or almost no remaining potential conflict; (2) slight remaining potential conflict; (3) moderate remaining potential conflict; (4) high remaining potential conflict; and (5) very high remaining potential conflict.

According to the couples' responses on the Schulman questionnaire 21% of the women and 46% of the men were classified as realistic in their perception of their partners. Sixty-three percent of the women and 38% of the men were classified as idealistic, and 17% of both men and women were classified as pessimistic. The results of the second questionnaire were as follows. Seventy-five percent of the couples were in the remaining potential conflict categories of no or almost no, or slight remaining potential conflict. The remaining 25% of the couples were in the moderate remaining potential conflict category.

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CHAPTER I

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

It has been only recently in the history of scientific research that the importance of marital research has been realized. Burgess and Wallin, in their classic study Engagement and Marriage, wrote that it was after World War I before enough research had taken place to enlighten the "experts and the public" that divorce, one of the results of problems in marriage, could not constructively be dealt with by making the granting of divorce more difficult (Burgess and Wallin, 1953:34). Since the realization that divorce has many causes, marital conflict has become an important area of scientific investigation (Kieren, 1972).

According to research the major areas of marital conflict are: (1) communication patterns; (2) sexual life style; (3) religion; (4) money matters; (5) re-creation; (6) friends; (7) in-law relations; (8) children; (8) alcohol and other drugs; (10) jealousy; and (11) careers (Bradburn, 1969; Burgess and Cottress, 1939; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Gottman, et al., 1976; Mudd, 1962; Olson and Ryder, 1970).

Not only do marriages experience conflict in these areas, but one study found a .94 correlation between the problems of distressed couples (those who seek marital counseling) and those who considered their relationship to be mutually satisfying (Gottman, et al., 1976). The problems in these marriages were the same. The difference between these marriages was the perception of the severity of the problems, with the distressed couples perceiving the problems as being more severe. This could be related to the couples' perception of their problem-solving and communication ability. Schulman (1974) found that communication could be blocked because of potential conflict in engagement relationships. He argues that couples may try to avoid conflict and, therefore, may view their relationship as running smoothly even if latent disagreement is present. If potential conflict blocks communication the conflicts will not be recognized or resolved. This is important because problem perception is considered to be a critical initial step in the problem-solving process (Bloom, 1950; Dewey, 1933; Kieren, Henton and Marotz, 1975; Polya, 1945; Russel, 1956).

Researchers have identified deficiencies in the courtship and engagement period (i.e. the mate selection process) as the cause of dissatisfaction among many couples who experience marital conflict (Bolton, 1961; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Cannon, 1977; Schulman, 1974). In fact, Burgess and Wallin wrote that many of the causes of divorce were related to the unwise selection of a mate. Many engaged couples are idealistic about their relationship and will often overlook conflict during their engagement. As a result, "...those who have not communicated about their differences may be surprised to find out about them after marriage and also may not know how to deal with them" (Schulman, 1974:145).

Thus, the process through which a relationship progresses towards marriage is important. Adjustment in marriage may be determined in large part according to the techniques derived by a couple in seeking compromise or consensus, that is to say the techniques of problem solving (such as communication patterns or the degree of equality in the relationship) built up in the premarital period (Bolton, 1961:180). Thus it can be argued that many "so-called marriage failures" are not as much marriage failures as they are courtship

failures. Many couples fail to see their lack of compatibility during the courtship period (Cannon, 1977:169).

Statement of the Problem

The premarital period of courtship and engagement has been identified as an important period of preparation for marriage and its conflicts (Bolton, 1966; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Cannon, 1977). If, indeed, most couples encounter the same types of marital conflict, the premarital period may serve to pinpoint potential conflict. Additionally, engaged couples could lay a foundation for future conflict resolution as they struggle with resolving these issues during engagement. However, many engaged couples are idealistic about their relationship. These couples overlook conflict during engagement. As a result, after marriage couples may not know how to deal effectively with the differences that they did not communicate about during the premarital period (Schulman, 1974). In addition, their lack of communication in their areas of difficulty or conflict may well result in their having inaccurate perceptions of their partner's responses in these areas. Once the

differences are recognized in marriage, they may be too large to be reconciled, even by an effectively communicating couple. Also, the couple may not know how to resolve their conflicts. Since they have not communicated about their conflicts before, they probably have had little practice at conflict resolution (Schulman, 1974). The end result may be divorce.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify how accurately a sample of engaged couples perceived their partners in relation to various common conflict areas (depicted in the literature) and to identify the reaction of these couples to revealed potential conflict.

Although many couples try to avoid conflict during engagement and, as a result, see their relationship as running smoothly, Schulman argues that if an engaged couple has not communicated before marriage in the areas of most common marital conflict, they may be surprised to find out about their differences after marriage and may not know how to deal with them since they had little practice dealing with conflict during courtship (Schulman, 1974). Also, since conflicts were avoided during

engagement, a couple may not have an accurate idea of exactly how much they differ, or in what areas.

Objectives of the Study

(1) To describe how accurately a sample of engaged couples perceived their partners in relation to the various common conflict areas depicted in the literature.

(2) To describe these couples' reaction to their revealed differences, that is, their particular areas of potential conflict.

Need for the Study

In 1976 in Montana there were 7300 marriages performed. During that same year in Montana there were 4900 divorces (Statistical Abstracts of the U.S., 1978). While these statistics disclose little about the actual divorce rate or the reasons for divorce they do provide evidence that there is merit in acquiring knowledge in the areas which may result in dysfunctional marital relationships.

This study described the accuracy of perception in communication among engaged couples in common areas of marital conflict. Furthermore, it described these couples' reactions to their differences after they were

revealed to them. These two areas of research are particularly important since the premarital (i.e. engagement) period has been stressed by researchers as a vital period of preparation for marriage. This is a period in which learning what differences exist between partners and how they will handle those differences may significantly affect the couples' marital relationship (Bloom, 1950; Bolton, 1961; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Cannon, 1977; Dewey, 1933; Schulman, 1974).

Assumptions of the Study

It was assumed that the couples in this study would react in some way to the potential conflict revealed to them by the investigator. However, it was not known how the couples would respond. Possible end responses included avoiding the potential conflicts, terminating the relationship, resolving the conflicts, or agreeing to disagree.

It was further assumed that whether the potential conflicts were avoided or resolved, the couples would go through some sort of process in reaction to their differences as revealed to them by the investigator. The process could have been one of communicating extensively about the conflict areas, or restricting

communication in the conflict areas, for examples. The process used by the couples in reacting to their respective potential conflicts was not researched. This study was not designed to investigate this process.

Another assumption of this study was that in order for the revealed potential conflicts to be resolved one or both of the partners of each couple would have to initiate the process necessary to do so. This study did not determine which person (i.e. the male or the female) was the primary initiator of the resolution process.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mate Selection and the Development of Love

Many researchers have identified the courtship and engagement period as an important period of preparation for marriage. Deficiencies in various aspects of mate selection are blamed by these researchers for some of the dissatisfaction among many couples who experience marital conflict (Bolton, 1961; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Cannon, 1977; Schulman, 1974; Vines, 1979). As a result, mate selection has become a more common area of research.

One area of mate selection extensively researched is the degree of similarity between potential mates during the mate selection process (Burgess and Cottrell, 1936; Burgess and Wallin, 1953; Kelly, 1941; Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962; Schellenberg and Bee, 1960; Winch, 1958). The data from these studies have been interpreted as demonstrating the operation of a number of filtering factors during the selection of a mate. These filtering factors define a "field of eligibles" from which a mate will ultimately be chosen (Kerckhoff and Davis, 1926:296). The relationship with a potential mate will usually be

terminated if it is determined, according to the filtering factors, that the potential mate does not fit in one's field of eligibles.

Three major filtering factors operate during mate selection. These are homogamy, value consensus, and need complimentarity (Kerckhoff and Davis, 1962; Winch, 1958).

Social and cultural homogamy is the earliest selective filter. The homogamy theory holds that people marry others like them, that is, like marry like. Thus potential partners who are not similar in such social and cultural areas as religion, educational background, class, race, and income are filtered out early in the mate selection process.

The next filter is value consensus. In the Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) study value consensus operated as a filter after an initial screening of potential mates had been made on the basis of homogamy factors. In this study value consensus was determined by Bernard Farber's Index of Consensus. This index required a rank ordering by both members of a couple of ten standards by which family success might be measured. The correlation between the two member's sets of rankings was the index of consensus.

Need complementarity operates as the third filter. In the Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) study those couples who had need complementarity were closest to marriage. Kerckhoff and Davis used William Schutz's FIRO-B scales to determine need complementarity.

The explanation of the mate selection process just described closely parallels one given by Ira Reiss (1976) in his description of the Wheel Theory of Love. This theory incorporates aspects of the homogamy, value consensus, and need complementarity theories into one.

The Wheel Theory of Love is based on Reiss's (1960) study entitled "Toward a Sociology of the Hetersexual Love Relationship" (Reiss, 1976). According to the theory, the development of love can be conceptualized into four processes: (1) rapport, (2) self-revelation, (3) mutual dependency, and (4) need fulfillment.

In the rapport process the ease of communication is an important factor. People vary considerably in their ability to gain rapport with others, but "one's social and cultural background is a key basis from which to predict the range of types of people for

whom one could feel rapport" (Reiss, 1976:93). The rapport process seems to compare with the homogamy theory of Winch (1958) and Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) since one usually feels rapport most easily with a person of similar social and cultural characteristics (Reiss, 1976:93).

After rapport has been established self-revelation, the second process in the wheel theory, can more easily occur. Homogamy theory, the idea that like marry like, is evident in the self-revelation process. One's background is a key determinant of the sort of things revealed by one individual to another (Reiss, 1976:94). For example, certain people feel that talking about one's views on religion or politics is proper at a specific stage in a relationship, and not much sooner. If a person was interacting with another person who had been socialized not to talk in these areas at the same stage in the relationship, self-revelation would be more difficult. Thus, people who have been similarly socialized and have similar social and cultural backgrounds (i.e. are homogamous) will find self-revelation easiest.

Mutual dependency is the third process in the wheel theory. Reiss reports that as rapport and self-revelation are established in a relationship "interdependent habit systems" are built up (Reiss, 1976:94). Habits of behaving develop, such as the fulfillment of one's sexual needs or the revelation of one's fears and wishes. These habits cannot be fulfilled alone and cooperation is required between the couple. Thus, a mutual dependency develops.

The fourth and final process in the wheel theory is personality need fulfillment. In this process Reiss is referring to such needs as the need for someone to love, to confide in, to stimulate ambition, or, at certain times, to contribute sympathy and support. Reiss reports that, to the degree that these needs are fulfilled, a love relationship will develop.

The Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) data, interpreted as showing that progress toward permanence in a relationship begins with a filtering of potential mates according to the cultural and social backgrounds of those mates, fit into Reiss's four part Wheel Theory of Love. Potential mates lacking similarity in the cultural and social areas are screened out of the field of

eligibles early in the mate selection process. The wheel theory rapport process is also largely dependent on social and cultural factors. Ease of communication, or rapport, is more likely between people who are similar to those in those areas.

Communication in Courtship and Engagement

Through 1960, according to Charles Bolton (1961), research in the area of mate selection concentrated, with few exceptions, upon statistically relating demographic and personality variables. Marriageable individuals were characterized by correlations of age, educational background, occupational grouping and such. While Bolton recognized the importance of such research, he argued that it did not thoroughly investigate all the variables present during mate selection. He maintained that research on the demographic and personality dimensions of mate selection needed to be supplemented by the investigation of the process through which a relationship is built. He argued that adjustment in marriage might be significantly determined by the "techniques of consensus built up in the premarital period" (Bolton, 1961:180).

The word 'technique' used by Bolton seems to imply that couples work out specific patterns of relating while seeking consensus on issues. Bolton emphasized that this process of relating or communicating was in need of research:

> Perhaps mate selection must be studied not only in terms of variables brought into the interaction situation but also as a process in which a relationship is built up, a process in which the transactions between individuals in certain societal contexts are determinants of turning points and commitments out of which marriage emerges. Seen from this viewpoint the development of a mate selection relation is a problematic process. By 'problematic' it is meant that the outcome of the contacts of the two individuals is not mechanically predetermined either by the relation of their personality characteristics or the institutional pattern providing the context for the development of the relation -- though these are both certainly to be taken into account -- but that the outcome is an end-product of a sequence of interactions characterized by advances and retreats along the paths of available alternatives, by definitions of the situation which crystallize tentative commitments and bar withdrawals from certain positions, by the sometimes tolerance and sometimes resolution of ambiguity, by reassessment of self and others, and by the tension between open-endedness and closure that characterizes all human relations. In short, the development of love relations is problematic because the product bears the stamp of what goes on between the couple as well as what they are as individuals (Bolton, 1961:171).

As a result, "what goes on between the couple", or the couple's interaction and communication, has become increasingly important for researchers. Virginia Satir, one of the most noted family therapists in the United States, calls communication "a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings... (it is) the largest single factor determining what kind of relationships" a person will have (Satir, 1972:30).

The degree of realism or idealism of couples has been used by researchers to study communication in mate selection. Kirkpatrick and Hobart's results indicate a lack of realism in all stages of courtship. The couples they studied actually disagreed with each other at a much higher rate than they estimated their number of disagreements to be (Kirkpatrick and Hobart, 1954). The couples did not have a realistic perception of their disagreements.

Similar results were reported in a more recent study. Schulman (1974) studied 98 couples who were either engaged or who were thinking seriously about marriage. Each partner of each couple completed a questionnaire three times by: (1) giving his or her

own views, (2) giving his prediction of his partner's views, and (3) predicting his partner's prediction of him. Scores derived from this instrument included (1) the number of disagreements between the partners, (2) the accuracy of prediction of the partner's responses, and (3) the number of estimated disagreements. An indication of the couple's potential conflicts, their communication, and their knowledge of potential conflicts was determined according to the scores.

Schulman (1974) tested the hypothesis that the greater the number of disagreements with a partner, the greater would be the number of inaccurate perceptions of the partner's responses. The hypothesis was supported by a significant correlation of $r = +0.70$, suggesting that potential conflict in a relationship can block communication so that the conflict cannot be recognized or resolved.

Schulman (1974) also reported that those respondents classified as high disagreement idealists seemed to have had little recognition of their high number of disagreements because idealizers were unaware of the areas in which they disagreed and/or they gave socially desirable answers on an engagement adjustment questionnaire,

which is a test used as a prediction of success in marriage. The idealizers actually scored significantly higher on the engagement adjustment questionnaire than realistic couples.

Sex Differences in Communication

Research in the area of sex differences in communication has identified differences in both verbal and nonverbal communication between men and women (Deaux, 1976; Edelsky, 1972; Evans and Howard, 1973; Exeline, 1972; Jones, 1971; Key, 1975; Kleinke, et al., 1973; Mehrabian, 1968; Michelini, et al., 1976). In verbal communication females are more correct in their use of grammar, while men sometimes consider nonstandard usage to be masculine. Women sound more tentative since they are more likely to end a sentence with a rise in pitch. Women more frequently use tag-questions rather than statements and also apologize more often than men (Deaux, 1976; Key, 1975).

In conversations between men and women, women are more often interrupted (Michelini et al., 1976). In one study, women interrupted women and men equally, but men interrupted women more than four times as often

as they interrupted men (Willis and William, 1976). Also, men disagreed with women more than four times as often as they agreed. Women agreed with men more often than they disagreed.

In nonverbal communication between women and men males less often directly face each other than do females (Jones, 1971). One study found that males orient themselves directly towards someone they dislike, while women orient themselves directly towards someone they like (Mehrabian, 1968).

Personal space differences include a tendency among men to keep greater distance between each other than women keep between each other. Male-female pairs stand closest (Baxter, 1970; Evans and Howard, 1973).

In terms of eye contact, men, in one study, found women who looked at them more attractive and interesting than women who did not look at them. Women preferred men who looked at them less (Kleinke et al., 1973).

Sex differences in communication seem to reflect dominance and submissiveness. Men make dominant gestures more often than women, and women act more submissive than men (Hoyenga, 1979). This is subject to exception since females are not "necessarily more compliant,

suggestible, or submissive than males" (Deaux, 1976; Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). Interest in dominance may have a biological bias toward men, but socialization undoubtedly exaggerates the sex difference (Hoyenga, 1979:316).

Review of the literature on mate selection discloses four general conclusions. First, the premarital courtship and engagement period is an important period of preparation for marriage. Deficiencies in the mate selection period and process may substantially affect adjustment and satisfaction in marriage. Second, social and cultural factors largely determine which potential mates will constitute a field of eligible mates. Those people who are not similar on social and cultural characteristics are least likely to progress towards marriage. Third, many couples are idealistic about their relationship. These couples have inaccurate perceptions of their mate in many areas of traditional marital conflict. Furthermore, idealistic couples are often unaware of their idealism. Finally, women and men differ in communication characteristics, both verbally and nonverbally. Much of the difference is related to the socialization of males to strive for dominance, and of females to accept submission to males.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample in this study consisted of 24 engaged couples who were undergraduate students attending Montana State University during winter quarter, 1981. To obtain couples, 68 Resident Advisors who lived in the MSU Residence Halls were contacted and the names of engaged people living in the halls were requested. The 37 female Resident Advisors contacted provided 23 names of engaged women, while the 31 male Resident Advisors provided four names of engaged men.

Once a list of engaged couples had been acquired one partner of each couple was contacted by telephone. The interviewer explained that he was a graduate student in family relations at Montana State University and was conducting a study of engaged couples, the topic of which was "Communication in Engagement." Before an invitation to participate in the study was made, the study was fully explained up to, but not including, the final questionnaire (which was designed to identify the couples' reaction to revealed potential conflict). If the couples had known that in the two

weeks following the first questionnaire they would be asked to complete an additional questionaire the couples' responses might have been biased during the interval between the two questionnaires.

After the study had been explained an invitation to participate in the study was made. If an agreement to participate was reached a time was set to meet and complete the first questionnaire. Twenty-four couples agreed to participate. Three declined.

Instruments

One of the objectives of this study was to describe how accurately the engaged partners perceived each other in relation to the various conflict areas listed in the introduction to this study. This was accomplished by administering the Schulman "Test of Communication" questionnaire, shown in Appendix 1, to the engaged couples. This questionnaire was devised by M.L. Schulman (1974). The instrument was pretested by Schulman on 20 couples and rated by a group of marriage counselors for relevance and social desirability. It was revised to include only those questions rated as relevant and not eliciting social desirability.

The validity of the test does not reside in the answers to the questions per se, but in the description of the individual or couple obtained after scoring the responses. In other words, if a couple scored in the idealistic range they would actually have an inaccurate perception of their partner's opinion in the conflict areas.

The Schulman questionnaire was used in its entirety in this study, but with three minor adjustments. These adjustments resulted after a pretest of five couples by the investigator. The adjustments made were the addition of short definitions to ambiguous words on three of the questions. Specifically, these words were "permissive", "graduate degree" and "political right" and "political left". The questions with these words were adjusted to include the following definitions: 1) "permissive" was defined as "being lenient and indulgent", 2) "graduate degree" was defined as "such as a masters or doctorate degree", and 3) "political left" was defined as "liberal" and "political right" as "conservative". These definitions can be seen on the Schulman questionnaire in Appendix 1.

The couples' responses on the Schulman questionnaire were used to calculate four major indicators used to measure accuracy of perception. The four were: (1) the number of potential conflicts; (2) a measure of the couples' communication; (3) a measure of the couples' knowledge of potential conflict; and (4) a measure of knowledge of potential conflict corrected for the number of potential conflicts.

The above measures of perception were determined by having each partner respond to 37 true/false questions. Each person completed the questionnaire as follows: First, partner A answered true or false to the 37 questions according to how partner A felt; second, partner A answered the same 37 questions according to how partner A thought partner B answered the questions; third, partner A answered the questions according to how partner A believed partner B believed partner A answered the questions. Partner B completed the questionnaire in the same manner as partner A. The couple independently filled out the questionnaire at the same time in the presence of the researcher. No verbal or non-verbal communication was allowed while completing the questionnaire.

From the couples' responses on the 37 questions four scores were determined. First, each couple's number of disagreements on the questionnaire was determined. This number indicated areas of potential conflict. Second, the questionnaire revealed those areas in which the couple had no knowledge of their disagreements. This communication indicator was calculated by tallying the number of each partner's errors in predicting the other partner's responses to the questions. Third, the number of estimated disagreements was tallied to indicate knowledge of potential conflict in the relationship. Fourth, an accuracy estimate was calculated. This estimate indicated knowledge of potential conflicts corrected for the number of disagreements. The accuracy estimate was derived by subtracting the number of estimated disagreements from the actual number of disagreements. By calculating the accuracy estimate in this fashion the amount of potential conflict was corrected for knowledge of potential conflict. Appendix 1 further details the scoring procedure for the Schulman questionnaire.

The couples were classified according to their respective accuracy estimates and the number of dis-

agreements on the Schulman questionnaire. Six possible categories were used as ultimate representations of the accuracy with which the partners perceived each other in the various conflict areas. The six perceptual categories were: (1) high disagreement idealists; (2) low disagreement idealists; (3) high disagreement realists; (4) low disagreement realists; (5) high disagreement pessimists; and (6) low disagreement pessimists. The high or low disagreement portion of the perceptual categories was determined by the couples' median number of disagreements. Those couples with higher than the median number of disagreements (i.e. more than nine disagreements) were in the high disagreement category. Those couples with nine or less disagreements were in the low disagreement category. For greater detail about the six perceptual categories see the Operational Definitions.

The results of the Schulman questionnaire were tabulated and reported to each respective couple as soon as they both had completed answering the questions. Each couple was given a written report of their potential conflicts. The reporting sheet is shown in Appendix 2. After the results were explained to each couple the

couple was thanked and told that their participation in the study was complete. It was necessary for each couple to believe that their participation in the study was complete at this stage. If the ultimate purpose of the study (i.e. to identify their reaction to revealed potential conflict) and the need to have the couple complete another questionnaire had been explained to the couples, they might have reacted differently between the time their potential conflicts were revealed and the time the reaction questionnaire was completed than they would have if they thought there were no follow-up.

A second questionnaire was devised to determine the couples' reaction to the revealed potential conflict. This questionnaire was called the Reaction to Revealed Potential Conflict questionnaire (shown in Appendix 3). Two weeks after the Schulman questionnaire had been completed the reaction questionnaire was administered to the couples. This questionnaire listed each area in which the respective couples disagreed on the Schulman questionnaire. Following each listed disagreement the couple was asked to check the response which best described how they handled the differences (i.e. potential conflicts)

revealed two weeks earlier. The questionnaire listed possible responses which ranged from having called the wedding and relationship off to having discussed respective differences and having reached an agreement concerning how the differences were to be handled.

Each partner completed the response questionnaire separately and, as with the Schulman questionnaire, no verbal or non-verbal communication was allowed between the partners. In this fashion the perception of each person concerning the degree of importance and the extent of agreement between the partners about each potential conflict could be compared.

While completing the reaction questionnaire it was possible for the partners of each couple to have differing perceptions of the degree of importance or extent of agreement between the partners about each respective potential conflict. Therefore, it was necessary to assign a remaining potential conflict (RPC) value to the couples' combination of answers for each question. A value of zero, one, two, three or four was assigned to each of the 28 possible response combinations (see Appendix 4 for this instrument). A RPC value of zero meant there was little or no

remaining potential conflict. A RPC value of one meant there was slight remaining potential conflict. Moderate remaining potential conflict was assigned a RPC value of two. High remaining potential conflict was assigned a value of three, and an RPC value of four was assigned to very high remaining potential conflict.

In order to classify the couples according to their respective RPC category, their RPC values for each question on the response questionnaire were added together and divided by the total number of responses. The average RPC value of each respective couple was used for classification purposes. In this manner each couple was categorized as having either: (1) no or almost no remaining potential conflict; (2) slight remaining potential conflict; (3) moderate remaining potential conflict; (4) high remaining potential conflict; or (5) very high remaining potential conflict. A more detailed explanation of the RPC categories is presented in the Operational Definitions section following.

Operational Definitions

The Schulman questionnaire had six possible categories into which the couples and individuals

were distributed. Below is an explanation of each of the six.

(1) Idealistic couples in the high disagreement category (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of +3.0 or more, and with ten or more disagreements) were characterized by having a large number of potential conflicts or disagreements which they did not perceive. A high disagreement idealistic person inaccurately predicted his or her partner's response on ten or more of the potential conflict questions.

(2) Idealistic couples in the low disagreement category (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of +3.0 or more, and nine or less disagreements) were characterized by having a low number of potential conflicts which they did not perceive. An individual in this perceptual category inaccurately predicted his or her partner's response on nine or less of the potential conflict questions.

(3) Realistic couples with a high number of disagreements (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of -1.0 to +2.5, and ten or more disagreements) were characterized by having a large number of potential conflicts. The individuals in this category were aware that they disagreed alot.

(4) Realistic couples with a low number of disagreements (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of -1.0 to +2.5, and nine or less disagreements) were characterized by having a low number of potential conflicts. The individuals in this category were aware of the disagreements they had.

(5) Pessimistic couples with a high number of disagreements (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of -1.5 or less, and ten or more disagreements) were characterized by having a large number of potential conflicts. The individuals in this category were aware that they disagreed alot, but did not recognize the extent of agreement that did exist.

(6) Pessimistic couples with a low number of disagreements (i.e. with an accuracy estimate of -1.5 or less, and nine or less disagreements) were characterized by having a low number of potential conflicts. The individuals in this category were aware of the disagreements they had, but did not recognize the extent of agreement that did exist.

The Reaction to Revealed Potential Conflict Questionnaire was used to classify each couple according to the average amount of remaining potential conflict

(RPC) in the couples' relationships. Five categories of remaining potential conflict are explained below.

(1) A RPC average value of 0 to .49 was used to assign couples to the very little or no remaining potential conflict category. In all or almost all of these couples' respective potential conflict areas the partners had the same perception of the degree of importance (of their respective potential conflict areas), and the partners agreed about the extent to which they were in agreement concerning how they wanted to handle the areas of potential conflict.

(2) A RPC average value of .50 to 1.25 was used to assign couples to the slight remaining potential conflict category. In most of these couples' respective potential conflict areas the partners had the same perception of the degree of importance (of their respective potential conflict areas) and, the partners agreed about the extent to which they were in agreement concerning how they wanted to handle the areas of potential conflict.

(3) A RPC value of 1.26 to 2.25 was used to assign couples to the moderate remaining potential conflict value category. In many of these couples' respective

potential conflict areas the partners did not have the same perception of the degree of importance (of the potential conflict areas), and the partners did not agree about the extent to which they were in agreement concerning how they wanted to handle their areas of potential conflict.

(4) A RPC value of 2.26 to 3.00 was used to assign couples to the high remaining potential conflict category. In most of these couples' respective potential conflict areas the partners did not have the same perception of the degree of importance (of the potential conflict areas), and the partners did not agree about the extent to which they were in agreement concerning how they wanted to handle their potential conflict areas.

(5) A RPC value of 3.01 to 4.00 was used to assign couples to the very high remaining potential conflict category. In all or almost all of these couples' respect potential conflict areas the partners did not have the same perception of the degree of importance (of the potential conflict areas), and the partners did not agree about the extent to which they were in agreement concerning how they wanted to handle their areas of potential conflict.

Analysis of the Data

The major statistical method used in analyzing the data collected in this study was Chi Square. The .05 level of significance was set for the study. This measure of statistical significance was used because Chi Square, when combined with Yate's Correction, was the most feasible measure of significance given the small sample size of this study (Garson, 1976:182).

Also used in this study was the Phi Coefficient measure of association. The measure was used because it dealt nicely with natural dichotomies such as male-female variables (Garson, 1976:195).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

The engaged couples in this study were undergraduate students enrolled at Montana State University, winter quarter, 1981. At least one partner of each couple resided in an MSU residence hall. Names of engaged couples were obtained by contacting the Resident Advisors living in the MSU residence halls and requesting the names of engaged people living in the halls. Sixty-two percent of the female Resident Advisors contacted knew of one or more engaged women living in the halls while only thirteen percent of the male Resident Advisors contacted had such information for men.[1]

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[1] One can only speculate about the reasons why more female than male Resident Advisors were able to provide names of engaged people. One possible reason may be that the engaged women often wear wedding rings and thus are more readily identifiable than engaged men. Another reason may be that women talk about marriage more than men. While a man is more likely to measure his success by personal measures such as his career or professional abilities, a woman is more likely to measure her success by being married to a successful man, that is, she is more likely to seek success through affiliation (Hoyenga, 1979). Thus, in the case of residence hall women and men, while a man may be more likely to talk with his friends about his career or professional interests, a woman may be more likely to talk about her boyfriend, engagement or wedding plans.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In addition to this description of the sample Table 1 presents background characteristics which were thought might influence the respondents' conflict resolution. These characteristics or variables were controlled for and the results are reported below. The data used to calculate Chi Square values for each of these are presented in Appendix 5.

Age and Length of Engagement. In 1978 the median age of U.S. men at their first marriage was 24.2 years. The respective age for women was 21.8 years (Reiss, 1980). The median age of the men in this study was 20 (average = 20.5). The median age for women was 19 years (average = 19.3). These figures are presented in Table 1. The difference between the ages in 1978 and the ages in this study is non-significant (p is greater than .05). None of the women or men in this study were previously married.

The average length of engagement of these couples was 7.75 months, with the mode being four months and the median being five months. Length of engagement was dichotomized into short and long engagement periods on the basis of the median length of engagement of the

TABLE 1 DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE*

Characteristics	Females (% of) N=24	Males (% of) N=24	N=24 %
Mean age (years)	19.3	20.5	
Average length of engagement			7.75 mos.
Mode length of engagement			4 mos.
Median length of engagement			5 mos.
Population of community of upbringing			
(a) farm/ranch	5 (21)	6 (25)	11 (23)
(b) small town (0-2499)	3 (13)	3 (13)	6 (13)
(c) small town (2500-24,999)	5 (21)	5 (21)	10 (21)
(d) large town (25,000-100,000)	10 (42)	10 (42)	20 (42)
(e) urban (over 100,000)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
(f) suburban (over 100,000)	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (2)
Religious preference			
(a) Catholic	13 (54)	6 (25)	19 (40)
(b) Protestant	8 (33)	10 (42)	18 (38)
(c) Non-denominational Christian	2 (8)	2 (8)	4 (8)
(d) none	1 (4)	6 (25)	7 (15)
Marital preparation of couples			
(a) high school marriage class	3 (13)	0 (0)	3 (6)
(b) college marriage class	12 (50)	8 (38)	21 (44)
(c) through a church	1 (4)	2 (8)	3 (6)
(d) none	8 (33)	13 (54)	21 (44)
Marital status of parents			
(a) still married and living together	19 (79)	20 (83)	39 (81)
(b) divorced	3 (13)	1 (4)	4 (8)
(c) father deceased	2 (8)	2 (8)	4 (8)
(d) mother deceased	0 (0)	1 (4)	1 (2)
Father's educational level			
(a) high school diploma	10 (42)	8 (33)	17 (38)
(b) less than one year college	2 (8)	1 (4)	3 (6)
(c) one or more years college	2 (8)	1 (4)	3 (6)
(d) college diploma	3 (13)	7 (29)	10 (21)
(e) post graduate degree	5 (21)	3 (13)	8 (17)
(f) other post high school	1 (4)	1 (4)	2 (4)
(g) other	1 (4)	3 (13)	4 (8)
Mother's educational level			
(a) high school diploma	9 (38)	10 (42)	19 (40)
(b) less than one year college	1 (4)	0 (0)	1 (2)
(c) one or more years college	5 (21)	1 (4)	6 (13)
(d) college diploma	5 (21)	6 (25)	11 (23)
(e) post graduate degree	0 (0)	1 (4)	1 (2)
(f) other post high school	2 (8)	3 (13)	5 (10)
(g) other	2 (8)	3 (13)	5 (10)

* Percentage may not equal 100% due to rounding to nearest number

couples in this study. Those couples engaged five or less months were assigned to the short engagement category, and those engaged six or more months were assigned to the long engagement category.

Home State and Town Population. Forty-two of the 48 people (87.5%) in this study had spent the majority of their life in Montana. Six of the participants (13%) had spent the majority of their life outside Montana. Sixteen of the people (33%) grew up in towns with a population of under 25,000 people. Eleven people (23%) grew up on a farm or ranch. Twenty people (42%) grew up in a large town with a population ranging from 25,000 to 100,000 people. Thus, fifty-six percent of the participants grew up in a living environment of under 25,000 people. There was virtually no difference between men and women in population category. There was no more male than female in the farm or ranch category, and one more female than male in the suburban category.

Religious Preference. The participants in this study were evenly split between Catholic and Protestant religious orientation, with 40% being Catholic and 38% being Protestant. Fourteen percent of the partici-

pants listed no religious preference and eight percent listed themselves as non-denominational Christians. There were no religious category differences by gender of respondent[2], and no significant difference between religious category and the accuracy of perception category[3].

Marital Preparation. Fifty percent of the females in this study had taken a college marriage and family class. This compared to 33% of the men having such a class. Thirty-three percent of the women had taken no high school, college or church marital preparation, and 54% of the men had no such preparation. The difference between men and women was not significant[4].

Parents' Educational Level. Forty percent of the parents of the participants in this study had a high school diploma. Twenty-one percent had a high school diploma and some form of post high school education, but no four-year university degree. Twenty-two percent had a college degree and nine percent had a post graduate degree. Fifty-three percent of all parents had at least some education beyond high school. There was no significant difference between the educa-

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(2) $X_2^2 = 4.04$; $p > .10$
(3) $X_2^2 = .85$; $p > .20$
(4) $X^2 = 2.40$; $p > .20$

tional level of the mothers and fathers of the participants in this study.[5]

Parent's Marital Status. Eighty-one percent of the parents of the participants in this study were still married and living together. Eight percent were divorced. There was no significant difference between the marital status of the parents of the males and the parents of the females.[6]

Summary of Controls. Controls were instituted for the amount of marital preparation such as high school or college marriage and family classes, the length of engagement, the parent's marital status, and the religious preference of the engaged couples in this study. There were no statistically significant differences in any of these variables (at the -05 level of significance) in their relationships to the couple's reaction to revealed potential conflicts.

Perceptual Accuracy

The accuracy with which the engaged partners in this study perceived each other in relation to the

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(5) $X^2 = 4.24$; $p > .20$
(6) $X^2 = .13$; $p > .20$

various conflict areas was determined by the Schulman Test of Communication Questionnaire (shown in Appendix 1). Three of the scores generated by this questionnaire were important in measuring the accuracy of perception among the engaged couples. The three were: (1) the female accuracy estimate; (2) the male accuracy estimate; and (3) the total couple accuracy estimate. These estimates were used to classify the individuals and couples into one of the following categories: (1) realistic; (2) idealistic; or (3) pessimistic (as defined in Operational Definitions). The individual accuracy estimates were determined by subtracting the individual number of estimated disagreements from the actual number of disagreements. The couple accuracy estimates were determined by adding the respective female and male disagreement estimates, dividing by two and subtracting from the total number of disagreements. By calculating the accuracy estimates in this fashion the amount of potential conflicts was corrected for knowledge of potential conflict. Table 2 shows the distribution of individuals and couples by six possible perceptual categories.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUPLES ACCORDING TO ACCURACY OF PERCEPTION AND AMOUNT OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT

TABLE 2

	Category (by accuracy estimate)[1]					
	Pessimists N % of total	% of people in this category	Realists N % of total	% of people in this category	Idealists N % of total	% of people in this category
No. of Disagreements High	Couples: 2 4.1%	50%	Couples: 4 16.6%	26.6%	Couples: 5 20.8%	71.4%
	Females: 1 4.1%	25%	Females: 2 8.3%	40%	Females: 7 29.2%	46.6%
	Males: 3 12.5%	75%	Males 1 4.1%	9.1%	Males: 6 25%	66.6%
Low	Couples: 1 4.1%	50%	Couples: 11 45.8%	73.3%	Couples: 2 8.3%	28.5%
	Females: 3 12.5%	75%	Females: 3 12.5%	60%	Females: 8 33.3%	53.3%
	Males: 1 4.1%	25%	Males: 10 41.6%	90.1%	Males: 3 12.5%	33.3%
Total	Couples: 2 8.3%		Couples: 15 62.5%		Couples: 7 29.1%	
	Females: 4 16.6%		Females: 5 20.8%		Females: 15 62.5%	
	Males: 4 16.6%		Males: 11 45.8%		Males: 9 37.5%	

(1) Category is determined by accuracy estimate. This estimate is determined by subtracting the number of estimated disagreements from the actual number of disagreements

Fifteen couples (63% of all couples) were classified as realistic. Five females (21% of all females) and eleven males (46% of all males) were also in this category. Seven couples (29% of all couples) were classified as idealistic, along with fifteen females (63% of all females) and nine males (38% of all males). Two couples (8% of all couples) were classified as pessimistic. Four females (16% of all females) and four males (16% of all males) were also in this category.

There were no statistically significant differences between the numbers of men and women in the realistic, idealistic and pessimistic categories[7]. However, the largest percentage of females in any one category (63% of all females) were idealistic, while the largest percentage of males in any one category (46% of all males) were in the realistic category.

Length of Engagement, Marital Preparation and Perceptual Category. Short or long length of engagement was not associated with having either an idealistic or realistic perception[8]. There was no significant difference between long and short engagement in any

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(7) $X^2 = 2.6$; $p > .20$
(8) Phi Coefficient = $(\phi) = -.09$

of the perceptual categories.

There was no statistically significant difference in the amount of marital preparation of the participants such as marriage and family high school or college classes, or preparation through a church, and the accuracy of perception categories into which they were placed (i.e. the idealistic, realistic or pessimistic categories)[9].

Reaction to Revealed Potential Conflict

Twenty engaged couples completed both the Schulman Test of Communication Questionnaire and the Reaction to Revealed Potential Conflict Questionnaire. Four couples declined the invitation to complete the reaction questionnaire.

Albeit the number of couples who declined to complete the reaction questionnaire was very small, it is interesting that three of the four males who chose to decline were in the pessimistic perceptual category. Three of the four females who declined were in the idealistic perceptual category. No females or males

(9) $X^2 = 1.76$; $p > .20$

who declined to complete the reaction questionnaire were in the realistic category.

Of the couples who did complete both questionnaires, 75% were assigned to the remaining-potential-conflict (RPC) categories of no or almost no, or slight RPC (as defined in the Operational Definitions). Twenty-five percent of the couples were in the moderate RPC category, and no couples were in the high or very high RPC categories. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the 20 couples according to the five RPC categories.

There was no significant difference between the numbers of couples in any of the RPC categories (of the three RPC categories in which couples appeared) and the perceptual categories.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUPLES, MALES AND FEMALES, ACCORDING TO AMOUNT OF REMAINING POTENTIAL CONFLICT (RPC)

TABLE 3

		No or Almost no RPC	Slight RPC	Moderate RPC	High RPC	Very High RPC
		N %	N %	N %	N %	N %
Perceptual Category	Realistic	Couples: 3 15 Females: 1 5 Males: 4 20	Couples: 8 40 Females: 3 15 Males: 6 30	Couples: 2 10 Females: 1 5 Males: 1 5	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0
	Idealistic	Couples: 0 0 Females: 2 10 Males: 0 0	Couples: 3 15 Females: 6 30 Males: 5 25	Couples: 3 15 Females: 4 20 Males: 3 15	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0
	Pessimistic	Couples: 1 5 Females: 1 5 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 2 10 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 1 5	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0
	Total	Couples: 4 20 Females: 4 20 Males: 4 20	Couples: 11 55 Females: 11 55 Males: 11 55	Couples: 5 25 Females: 5 25 Males: 5 25	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0	Couples: 0 0 Females: 0 0 Males: 0 0

(For detailed explanation of each RPC category see Operational Definitions

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of the Findings

The Schulman (1974) study compared the scores of engaged couples on a standard engagement adjustment questionnaire (Burgess and Wallin, 1953:306-309) and a test of communication devised by Schulman. The purpose of the comparison was to determine the effect of "social desirability" on the outcome of this particular engagement adjustment test. Social desirability exists when a questionnaire has transparent items and scoring procedures, such as answers which a respondent can easily tell will either justify or condemn a marriage.

Schulman argued that engaged couples have such a strong emotional investment in believing that their marriage will succeed that the couples are biased toward giving socially desirable answers. In fact, Schulman found that idealistic couples (i.e. those couples who had inaccurate perceptions of their partners' responses to questions on his questionnaire) were likely to receive high scores on the standard engagement adjustment test. These couples might have been encouraged to marry if they had taken only the engagement adjustment test.

Schulman's test of communication differentiated engaged partners on the basis of idealistic or realistic perception of each other when the couples could not be differentiated by a standard engagement adjustment questionnaire.

The present study used Schulman's test of communication because of the reduced risk of social desirability. The test was used to classify engaged couples according to the degree of accuracy with which the partners perceived each other in relation to various conflict areas.

This study elaborated on Schulman's argument that avoidance of conflict is a factor which can block communication. If couples avoid conflict, consensus may be perceived where it does not exist. With this in mind the potential conflict areas of engaged couples were revealed to the respective couples. The purpose of revealing the potential conflict was to identify the reaction of the engaged couples to their own areas of conflict.

The results of this study suggest that regardless of engaged couples' classification as idealistic, realistic or pessimistic, couples will utilize information

given to them about their respective areas of potential conflict to resolve all, almost all, or most of their potential conflicts. Any couple who may have been avoiding their respective potential conflicts prior to participating in the study no longer avoided the conflicts but resolved them.

If any instability was present in the relationship of the couples who participated in this study it was not manifest. All 20 couples who completed the second questionnaire were still engaged and planning to marry on the same date as set before participating in the study.[10]

The instruments used in this study did not differentiate between women and men in their desire to utilize the potential conflict information revealed to them to resolve the conflicts in their respective relationships. That is to say, no information was ascertained concerning whether it was the woman or the man in each relationship who initiated the process necessary to resolve potential conflicts.

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[10] Four couples would not agree to complete the second (i.e. the reaction) questionnaire. No information was available concerning the status of those relationships.

Such information does not seem to be vital, however, since 75% of the couples utilized the information given to them to resolve all or almost all of the potential conflicts revealed regardless of the gender of the primary initiator of the resolution process. The remaining twenty-five percent of the couples utilized the information about their potential conflicts to the degree that they had only moderate remaining potential conflict.

Controls were instituted for the amount of marital preparation such as high school or college marriage and family classes, the length of engagement, the parents' marital status, and the religious preference of the engaged couples in this study. There were no statistically significant differences in any of the above variables in their relationship to the couples' reaction to revealed potential conflict.

For use in this study the Schulman test of communication questionnaire had one deficiency. That is, the couples' responses on the questionnaire determined whether or not a disagreement or potential conflict existed, but it provided no empirical indication concerning the degree of severity of the conflicts.

The questions were worded to identify even the smallest potential conflict. Therefore, while measuring the reaction of the couples to revealed potential conflict, in most cases it was not known whether each couple was responding to a disagreement which was vast and intense, or small and minor. A minor disagreement in which the partners' views were only minimally disparate would likely be easier to resolve than a vast intense disagreement. The couples' responses on the reaction questionnaire could be used as an indication of the intensity of the disagreement only in those cases in which the partners still disagreed while completing the second questionnaire. If an agreement in an intense disagreement area had been reached, however, there was no way of knowing the degree of severity of the conflict or the process used in resolving the disagreement.

Implications of the Study

Researchers have identified deficiencies in the courtship and engagement period as the cause of dissatisfaction among many couples who experience marital conflict (Bolton, 1961; Burgess and Wallin,

1953; Cannon, 1977; Schulman, 1974). In fact, Burgess and Wallin (1953) concluded that many of the causes of divorce were related to the unwise selection of a mate. Bolton (1961) argued that adjustment in marriage may be determined in large part according to the techniques derived by engaged couples while seeking compromise in consensus during courtship. That is, the techniques of problem solving (such as the communication patterns or the degree of equality in the relationship) built up in the premarital period may substantially affect adjustment in marriage. Schulman (1974) believes that couple communication about differences is very important before marriage since couples who have not talked about their differences may be surprised to find out about them after marriage. In addition, because they have had little practice at dealing with conflict, they may not know how to handle the differences. Thus, the premarital period is stressed as a vital period of preparation for marriage.

One of the conclusions of this study is that these engaged couples were receptive to dealing with specific conflict areas in their relationships. Even though some of these engaged partners may have avoided

conflict until it was identified as such, all of the couples dealt with their respective conflict areas once the areas were identified.

An important implication of this study, and that of Schulman's, is that professionals who work with engaged couples in preparation for marriage may benefit couples most by concentrating on the identification of specific potential conflict areas. Helping couples to identify specific areas which may be important to discuss appears to benefit couples more than administering a marriage success prediction test, which may be subject to social desirability. Mutual cognizance of potential conflict, at least in this study, resulted in discussion between partners and resolution of differences.

The couples in this study no longer avoided their differences once the differences were identified. Rather, these couples resolved their potential conflicts. While none of these couples broke up over their differences, it is conceivable that others might[11]. If, by identifying

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[11] Four couples would not agree to complete the second questionnaire. No information was known concerning the status of those relationships.

couples' differences, the couples do not block communication in these areas, they would be expected to either reach resolutions, terminate the relationship or "agree to disagree" (Schulman, 1974).

Schulman argued that if couples do not get practice at discussing and resolving their differences before marriage, they may not know how to resolve their differences during marriage. An important implication of this study is that by identifying potential conflict in couples' relationships during engagement two benefits are gained for the couples. First, professionals may help couples learn, during engagement, how to resolve their conflict. Thus, couples prepare for future conflict resolution in marriage. As a result, in marriage conflicts which are resolvable will, in fact, be resolved rather than left unresolved because couples failed to develop skills for conflict resolution before marriage. Second, by identifying, during engagement, conflict which is not resolvable couples will learn of the extent of their differences and may choose not to marry. Thus, nonresolvable conflict is caught in engagement and will not be responsible for the breakup of a marriage.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is the extent of generalizations one can make from the sample population. All of the couples in this study were students at Montana State University and, thus, no generalizations can be made to people who are not students, or who do not possess the same general characteristics such as age, parents' marital status, environment of upbringing, or level of education.

Students may be different from non-students in the way in which they deal with potential conflict. Educational level, social class, and "style of life" are interrelated and have an effect on the possibility of divorce (Goode, 1956). An argument can be made that people who are attending college are exposed to a variety of new ideas and sets of values and are more self-activated and have more self-control (Reiss, 1976:380). If this is true, students may be more adaptive or disciplined and may have more confidence in their problem solving ability than non-students. A couple's perception of their problem solving ability may also have an effect on the couple's perception of the severity of their conflicts (Gottman, et al., 1976).

The sample population in this study was small (i.e. 20 couples). While the results of this study indicate a definite inclination on the part of engaged couples to use the potential conflict information revealed, the results would have been stronger had a larger sample been possible.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

OUTLINE FOR A USER'S MANUAL FOR TEST OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN ENGAGED COUPLES

I Introduction to the test

- A. Why it was developed
  1. Attenuation of "social desirability"
  2. Objective scoring
  3. Identification of idealistic, realistic, and pessimistic perception
- B. How the test was pretested and finally tested
  1. Pilot study (n=20 couples)
  2. Final study (n=98 couples)
  3. Description of sample in final study

II What does the test consist of

- A. 37 true-false questions of opinion or desire
- B. Predictions of the partner's responses on these items
- C. Predictions of the partner's predictions
- D. Scores
  1. Number of disagreements: indicates potential conflicts
  2. Number of prediction errors: communication indicator
  3. Number of estimated disagreements: indicates knowledge of potential conflicts in the relationship
  4. Accuracy estimate: indicates knowledge of potential conflicts in the relationship corrected for the number of disagreements. This score determines whether a couple is considered to be idealistic, realistic, or pessimistic in perception.

III How to score the test

- A. Transfer answers to the scoring sheet starting in the middle and moving to the right for

males and the left for females to record the higher order predictions.

B. Count each disjunction in the center two columns to yield the total number of disagreements.

C. Count each disjunction between columns two and four to yield the total number of female prediction errors. Count each disjunction between columns three and five to yield the total number of male prediction errors.

D. Count each disjunction between columns two and three to give the female disagreement estimate. Count each disjunction between columns four and five to give the male disagreement estimate.

E. Accuracy estimate=total number of disagreements -(female + male disagreement estimate/2)
   1. Female accuracy estimate = total number of disagreements - female disagreement estimate
   2. Male accuracy estimate = total number of disagreements - male disagreement estimate

IV Interpretation of scores

A. High vs. low in number of disagreements

B. Pessimist, realist, or idealist in perception according to accuracy estimate. The man and woman may also be compared on their perception.

C. Females may be more likely to overlook conflict where there are a high number of prediction errors; males seem to be more likely to see conflict.

V Suggestions for interpretation to couples

A. Idealists with a high number of disagreements:
   1. They believe that the other person thinks just as they do.
   2. There are a large number of potential conflicts which they do not perceive.
   3. These are the conditions most conducive to disillusionment after marriage.

B. Idealists with a low number of disagreements:
   1. They believe the other person thinks just as they do.
   2. There are a small number of potential conflicts which they do not perceive.

3. Since people change, they may need practice in handling disagreements in case they come up later.

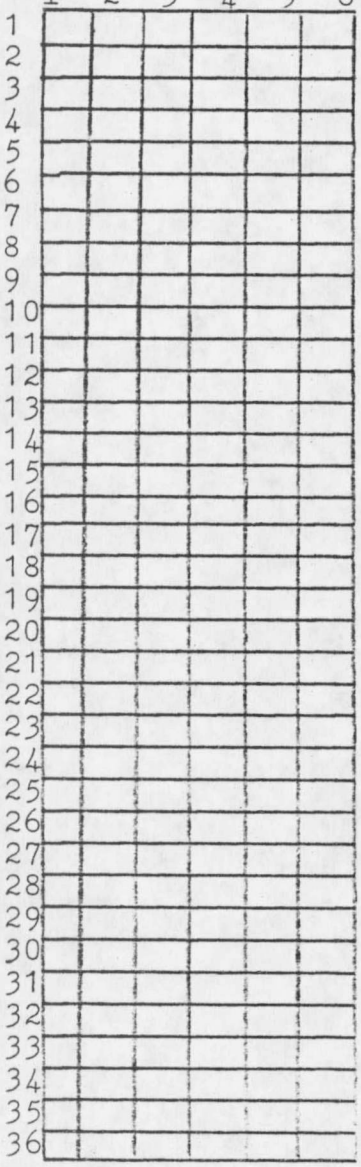
C. Realists with a high number of disagreements:
   1. They are aware that they disagree alot.
   2. They appear to have agreed to disagree.

D. Realists with a low number of disagreements:
   1. They have a small number of disagreements
   2. They are aware of the disagreement they have.
   3. These are the conditions most conducive to a conflict-free marriage.

E. Pessimists with a high number of disagreements:
   1. They are aware that they disagree alot.
   2. They do not see the extent of agreement that exists.
   3. What are the motivations for this negatively toned relationship?

F. Pessimists with a low number of disagreements:
   1. They have a small number of disagreements, but they believe they disagree much more.
   2. Are they protecting themselves from disappointment by anticipating conflict?

SCORE SHEET FOR TEST OF COMMUNICATION



Names_____

Date_____

Female age___ Male age___

Number of disagreements_____

Female prediction errors_____

Male prediction errors_____

Total prediction errors_____

Female disagreement estimate___

Male disagreement estimate_____

Total disagreement estimate____

Female accuracy estimate_____

Male accuracy estimate_____

Total accuracy estimate_____

Accuracy estimate between:

-1.0 to 2.5 = realist perception
+3.0 or more = idealist perception
-1.5 or less = pessimist perception

Number of disagreements:

10 or less = low disagreement
11 or more = high disagreement

SCHULMAN COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT STATEMENT

I am participating in this study of my own free will and I recognize that I am solely responsible for how I answer on the questionnaire(s) used in this study. I want the results of this study in my individual case to be reported to me and my co-participant. I realize that this study may reveal areas of traditional marital conflict in which there are differences between my co-participant and me. I am aware that all information given by me in this study is strictly confidential. No one other than the researcher, my partner and myself will know how I respond in the study. The results of all the respondents in the study will be reported in terms of group averages.

_____
SIGNATURE

(1) Date _____

(2) Name _____

(3) Current Address _____

(4) Current Phone _____

(5) Address after marriage (if known) _____

(6) Phone after marriage (if known) _____

(7) Age ____

(8) In what state have you lived the majority of your life? _____

(9) In which of the following population categories did you grow up?
___(A) Farm/Ranch
___(B) Small town (pop. up to 2499)
___(C) Small town (pop. 2500 to 24,999)
___(D) Large town (pop. 25,000 to 100,000)
___(E) Urban community of over 100,000
___(F) Suburban community of over 100,000

(10) Date you became engaged _____

(11) Exact or approximate date you plan to be married (if known) _____

(12) Religious preference _____

(13) Educational level
___(A) high school diploma (including high school equivalency test)
___(B) less than 1 year college
___(C) 1 or more years of college
___(D) college diploma
___(E) post graduate degree (such as masters or Ph.d.)
___(F) other post high school education, such as beauty school, business school or vocational training
___(G) other (please specify)_____

(14) I have had: (check all that apply)
___(A) a high school family life or marriage course(s). How many?____
___(B) college family life or marriage course(s). How many?____

___(C) marriage preparation classes through a church
___(D) consultation with a marriage counselor (in preparation for marriage)
___(E) none of the above
___(F) other (please specify)_____

(15) Occupation _____

(16) Father's educational level (check one)
___(A) high school diploma (including high school equivalency test)
___(B) less than 1 year college
___(C) 1 or more years college
___(D) college diploma
___(E) post graduate degree
___(F) other post high school education such as beauty school or vocational training
___(G) other (please specify) _____

(17) Father's occupation _____

(18) Mother's education level (check one)
___(A) high school diploma (including high school equivalency test)
___(B) less than 1 year college
___(C) 1 or more years college
___(D) college diploma
___(E) post graduate degree
___(F) other post high school education, such as beauty school or business school or vocational training
___(G) other (please specify)_____

(19) Mother's occupation_____

(20) Parent's marital status (read all answers -- may check more than one)

___(A) married and living together
___(B) separated
___(C) divorced, neither remarried
___(D) divorced, father remarried
___(E) divorced, mother remarried
___(F) mother was previously married (before marrying my father)
___(G) father was previously married (before marrying my mother)
___(H) father deceased, mother remarried?
___yes ___no
___(I) mother deceased, father remarried?
___yes ___no

****

DIRECTIONS:

There is to be no communication between you and your partner until both of you are completely through with the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 37 true/false questions. You are to answer the same 37 questions three times. First, you will answer the questions according to <u>how you yourself feel</u>; second you will answer according to <u>how you think your partner will answer</u>; third, you will answer according to <u>how you think your partner will think you answered</u> (in the first 37 questions).

The questions are not listed in the same order so it is important to read each question thoroughly before answering. The directions are restated at the beginning of each section. Please begin.

Female Form

Read each question and mark true or false.

TRUE FALSE

____ ____ 1. I prefer to be "on the go" all or most of the time, rather than be at home.

____ ____ 2. I would not like to have demonstrations of affection from him practically all the time.

____ ____ 3. I do not care about being orderly.

____ ____ 4. I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage.

____ ____ 5. I do not want to have three or more children.

____ ____ 6. I express my angry feelings to him as well as my loving feelings.

____ ____ 7. I do not want to get married unless we have savings.

____ ____ 8. I believe in God with no doubts.

____ ____ 9. I would like us to join clubs and organizations.

____ ____ 10. I believe in buying now and paying later.

____ ____ 11. I am not the "outdoor type", so this kind of activity is not very important to me.

____ ____ 12. I want my husband to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 13. I am experienced in sexual matters.

____ ____ 14. I do not care about having money.

____ ____ 15. I demonstrate affection to him practically all the time.

____ ____ 16. I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient).

____ ____ 17. I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 18. I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 19. I do not expect my husband to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement.

____ ____ 20. I am willing to move often to other parts of the country if it means financial or career advancements.

____ ____ 21. I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents.

____ ____ 22. He expresses his angry feelings to me as well as his loving feelings.

____ ____ 23. I do not approve of marijuana.

____ ____ 24. I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my husband.

____ ____ 25. I want to have friends of my own even if my husband doesn't like them.

____ ____ 26. If my husband went to school and I supported him, he would not feel like a man.

____ ____ 27. My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative).

____ ____ 28. When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my husband.

____ ____ 29. I want a husband who is not very experienced in sexual matters, but who expects to learn with me.

____ ____ 30. He does not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship.

____ ____ 31. I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards).

___ ___ 32. A neat home is not very important to me.

___ ___ 33. It would not bother me if I earned more money than my husband.

___ ___ 34. I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family).

___ ___ 35. It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along.

___ ___ 36. I am not planning to have a career.

How would HE answer the following? Mark each answer true or false.

TRUE	FALSE		
____	____	1.	"I prefer to be 'on the go' all or most of the time, rather than be at home."
____	____	2.	"I do not demonstrate affection to her practically all the time."
____	____	3.	"I do not care about being orderly."
____	____	4.	"I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage."
____	____	5.	"I do not want to have three or more children."
____	____	6.	"She expresses her angry feelings to me as well as her loving feelings."
____	____	7.	"I do not want to get married unless we have savings."
____	____	8.	"I believe in God with no doubts."
____	____	9.	"I would like to join clubs and organizations."
____	____	10.	"I believe in buying now and paying later."
____	____	11.	"I am not the 'outdoor type', so this kind of activity is not very important to me."
____	____	12.	"I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate)."
____	____	13.	"I want a wife who is experienced in sexual matters."
____	____	14.	"I do not care about having money."
____	____	15.	"I like to have demonstrations of affection from her practically all the time."
____	____	16.	"I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient)."

___ ___ 17. "I feel my wife should have a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate)."

___ ___ 18. "I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards)."

___ ___ 19. "I do not expect to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement."

___ ___ 20. "I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancements."

___ ___ 21. "I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents."

___ ___ 22. "I express my angry feelings to her as well as my loving feelings."

___ ___ 23. "I do not approve of marijuana."

___ ___ 24. "I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my wife."

___ ___ 25. "I want to have friends of my own, even if my wife doesn't like them."

___ ___ 26. "If I went to school and my wife supported me, I would not feel like a man."

___ ___ 27. "My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative)."

___ ___ 28. "When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my wife."

___ ___ 29. "I am not very experienced in sexual matters, but expect to learn with my wife."

___ ___ 30. "I do not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship."

___ ___ 31. "I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards)."

____ ____ 32. "A neat home is not very important to me."

____ ____ 33. "It would not bother me if my wife earned more money than I did."

____ ____ 34. "It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along."

____ ____ 35. "I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family)."

____ ____ 36. "When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved."

____ ____ 37. "My fiance(e) does not plan to have a career."

How would HE think you have answered the following:
Mark each answer true or false.

TRUE FALSE

___ ___ 1. I prefer to be "on the go" all or most of the time, rather than be at home.

___ ___ 2. I would not like demonstrations of affection from him practically all the time.

___ ___ 3. I do not care about being orderly.

___ ___ 4. I do not care whether our parents approve our marriare.

___ ___ 5. I do not want to have three or more children.

___ ___ 6. I express my angry feelings to him as well as my loving feelings.

___ ___ 7. I do not want to get married unless we have savings.

___ ___ 8. I believe in God with no doubts.

___ ___ 9. I would like us to join clubs and organizations.

___ ___ 10. I believe in buying now and paying later.

___ ___ 11. I am not the "outdoor type", so this kind of activity is not important to me.

___ ___ 12. I want my husband to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

___ ___ 13. I am experienced in sexual matters.

___ ___ 14. I do not care about having money.

___ ___ 15. I demonstrate affection to him practically all the time.

___ ___ 16. I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient).

____ ____ 17. I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 18. I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 19. I do not expect my husband to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement.

____ ____ 20. I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancement.

____ ____ 21. I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents.

____ ____ 22. He expresses his angry feelings to me as well as his loving feelings.

____ ____ 23. I do not approve of marijuana.

____ ____ 24. I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my husband.

____ ____ 25. I want to have friends of my own even if my husband doesn't like them.

____ ____ 26. If my husband went to school and I supported him, he would not feel like a man.

____ ____ 27. My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative).

____ ____ 28. When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my husband.

____ ____ 29. I want a husband who is not very experienced in sexual matters, but who expects to learn with me.

____ ____ 30. He does not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship.

____ ____ 31. I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 32. A neat home is not very important to me.

____ ____ 33. It would not bother me if I earned more money than my husband.

____ ____ 34. I get along with fiance(e)'s parents (family).

____ ____ 35. It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along.

____ ____ 36. When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved.

____ ____ 37. I am not planning to have a career.

Male Form

Read each question and mark true or false.

TRUE FALSE

____ ____ 1. I prefer to be "on the go" all or most of the time, rather than be at home.

____ ____ 2. I do not demonstrate affection to her practically all the time.

____ ____ 3. I do not care about being orderly.

____ ____ 4. I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage.

____ ____ 5. I do not want to have three or more children.

____ ____ 6. She expresses her angry feelings to me as well as her loving feelings.

____ ____ 7. I do not want to get married unless we have savings.

____ ____ 8. I believe in God with no doubts.

____ ____ 9. I would like us to join clubs and organizations.

____ ____ 10. I believe in buying now and paying later.

____ ____ 11. I am not the "outdoor type", so this kind of activity is not important to me.

____ ____ 12. I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 13. I want a wife who is experienced in sexual matters.

____ ____ 14. I do not care about having money.

____ ____ 15. I like to have demonstrations of affection from her practically all the time.

____ ____ 16. I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient).

____ ____ 17. I feel my wife should have a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 18. I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 19. I do not expect to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement.

____ ____ 20. I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancement.

____ ____ 21. I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents.

____ ____ 22. I express my angry feelings to her as well as my loving feelings.

____ ____ 23. I do not approve of marijuana.

____ ____ 24. I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my wife.

____ ____ 25. I want to have friends of my own, even if my wife doesn't like them.

____ ____ 26. If I went to school and my wife supported me, I would not feel like a man.

____ ____ 27. My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative).

____ ____ 28. When I am/married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my wife.

____ ____ 29. I am not very experienced in sexual matters, but expect to learn with my wife.

____ ____ 30. I do not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship.

____ ____ 31. I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 32. A neat home is not very important to me.

____ ____ 33. It would not bother me if my wife earned more money than I did.

____ ____ 34. It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along.

____ ____ 35. I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family).

____ ____ 36. When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved.

____ ____ 37. My fiance(e) does not plan to have a career.

How would SHE answer the following? Mark each answer True or False.

TRUE FALSE

____ ____ 1. "I prefer to be 'on the go' all or most of the time, rather than be at home."

____ ____ 2. "I would not like to have demonstrations of affection from him practically all the time."

____ ____ 3. "I do not care about being orderly."

____ ____ 4. "I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage."

____ ____ 5. "I do not want to have three or more children."

____ ____ 6. "I express my angry feelings to him as well as my loving feelings."

____ ____ 7. "I do not want to get married unless we have savings."

____ ____ 8. "I believe in God with no doubts."

____ ____ 9. "I would like us to join clubs and organizations."

____ ____ 10. "I believe in buying now and paying later."

____ ____ 11. "I am not the 'outdoor type', so this kind of activity is not important to me."

____ ____ 12. "I want my husband to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate)."

____ ____ 13. "I am experienced in sexual matters."

____ ____ 14. "I do not care about having money."

____ ____ 15. "I demonstrate affection to him practically all the time."

____ ____ 16. "I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient)."

____ ____ 17. "I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate)."

____ ____ 18. "I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 19. "I do not expect my husband to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement."

____ ____ 20. "I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancements."

____ ____ 21. "I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents."

____ ____ 22. "He expresses his angry feelings to me as well as his loving feelings."

____ ____ 23. "I do not approve of marijuana."

____ ____ 24. "I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my husband."

____ ____ 25. "I want to have friends of my own, even if my husband doesn't like them."

____ ____ 26. "If my husband went to school and I supported him, he would not feel like a man."

____ ____ 27. "My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative)."

____ ____ 28. "When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my husband."

____ ____ 29. "I want a husband who is not very experienced in sexual matters, but who expects to learn with me."

____ ____ 30. "He does not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship."

____ ____ 31. "I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards)."

____ ____ 32. "A neat home is not very important to me."

____ ____ 33. "It would not bother me if I earned more money than my husband."

____ ____ 34. "I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family)."

____ ____ 35. "It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along."

____ ____ 36. "When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved."

____ ____ 37. "I am not planning to have a career."

How would SHE think you have answered the following? Mark each answer true or false.

TRUE FALSE

____ ____ 1. I prefer to be "on the go" all or most of the time, rather than be at home.

____ ____ 2. I do not demonstrate affection to her practically all the time.

____ ____ 3. I do not care about being orderly.

____ ____ 4. I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage.

____ ____ 5. I do not want to have three or more children.

____ ____ 6. She expresses her angry feelings to me as well as her loving feelings.

____ ____ 7. I do not want to get married unless we have savings.

____ ____ 8. I believe in God with no doubts.

____ ____ 9. I would like us to join clubs and organizations.

____ ____ 10. I believe in buying now and paying later.

____ ____ 11. I am not the "outdoor type", so this kind of activity is not important to me.

____ ____ 12. I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 13. I want a wife who is experienced in sexual matters.

____ ____ 14. I do not care about having money.

____ ____ 15. I like to have demonstrations of affection from her practically all the time.

____ ____ 16. I believe in raising children permissively (being indulgent and lenient).

____ ____ 17. I feel my wife should have a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).

____ ____ 18. I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 19. I do not expect to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement.

____ ____ 20. I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancement.

____ ____ 21. I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents.

____ ____ 22. I express my angry feelings to her as well as my loving feelings.

____ ____ 23. I do not approve of marijuana.

____ ____ 24. I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my wife.

____ ____ 25. I want to have friends of my own, even if my wife doesn't like them.

____ ____ 26. If I went to school and my wife supported me, I would not feel like a man.

____ ____ 27. My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative).

____ ____ 28. When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my wife.

____ ____ 29. I am not very experienced in sexual matters, but expect to learn with my wife.

____ ____ 30. I do not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship.

____ ____ 31. I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).

____ ____ 32. A neat home is not very important to me.

____ ____ 33. It would not bother me if my wife earned more money than I did.

____ ____ 34. It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along.

____ ____ 35. I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family).

____ ____ 36. When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved.

____ ____ 37. My fiance(e) does not plan to have a career.

APPENDIX 2

SCHULMAN COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

One of the main areas of your relationship that was explored in this study included those areas in which you and your partner differ. DIFFERENCES ARE NEITHER BAD NOR GOOD IN THEMSELVES. RATHER, IT IS HOW YOU AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND A COUPLE FEEL ABOUT A DIFFERENCE THAT MAKES IT IMPORTANT OR NOT IMPORTANT IN YOUR PARTICULAR RELATIONSHIP. Marriage experts believe that most couples experience differences (such as disagreements or conflicts) in many of the same areas. These differences result in unhappiness for some couples. However, other couples are very happy in the face of similar differences.

The circled statements below represent the statements on which your answers differed on the Schulman questionnaire. These circled areas represent POTENTIAL conflict in your relationship.

	MALE	FEMALE
1. I prefer to be "on the go all or most of the time, rather than be at home	___	___
2. I do not demonstrate affection to her practically all the time. I would not like to have demonstrations of affection from him practically all the time.	___	___

		MALE	FEMALE
3.	I do not care about being orderly.	____	____
4.	I do not care whether our parents approve our marriage.	____	____
5.	I do not want three or more children.	____	____
6.	She expresses her angry feelings to me as well as her loving feelings. I express my angry feelings to him as well as my loving ones.	____	____
7.	I do not want to get married unless we have savings.	____	____
8.	I believe in God with no doubts.	____	____
9.	I would like to join clubs and organizations.	____	____
10.	I believe in buying now and paying later.	____	____
11.	I am not the "outdoor type", so this kind of activity is not important to me.	____	____
12.	I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate). I want my husband to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).	____	____
13.	I want a wife who is experienced in sexual matters. I am experienced in sexual matters.	____	____
14.	I do not care about having money.	____	____
15.	I like to have demonstrations of affection from her practically all the time. I demonstrate affection to him practically all the time.	____	____
16.	I believe in raising children permissively (being lenient and indulgent).	____	____

		MALE	FEMALE
17.	I feel my wife should have a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate). I want to obtain a graduate degree (such as a masters or doctorate).	____	____
18.	I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards). I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards).	____	____
19.	I do not expect to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement. I do not expect my husband to make the final decisions for the family where there is disagreement.	____	____
20.	I am willing to move often to other parts of the country, if it means financial or career advancement.	____	____
21.	I would not feel free to borrow money from our parents.	____	____
22.	I express my angry feelings to her as well as my loving feelings. He expresses his angry feelings to me as well as his loving ones.	____	____
23.	I do not approve of marijuana.	____	____
24.	I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my wife. I do not intend to observe the same religious practices as my husband.	____	____
25.	I want to have friends of my own, even if my wife doesn't like them. I want to have friends of my own, even if my husband doesn't like them.	____	____
26.	If I went to school and my wife supported me, I would not feel like a man. If my husband went to school and I supported him, he would not feel like a man.	____	____

		MALE	FEMALE
27.	My political leaning is to the left (left is more liberal, right is more conservative)	___	___
28.	When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my wife. When I am married, I do not want to spend almost all of my free time with my husband.	___	___
29.	I am not very experienced in sexual matters, but expect to learn with my wife. I want a husband who is not very experienced in sexual matters, but who expects to learn with me.	___	___
30.	I do not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship. He does not tend to be the dominant person in our relationship.	___	___
31.	I like unconventional people (not conforming to accepted standards). I enjoy being unconventional (not conforming to accepted standards).	___	___
32.	A neat home is not very important to me.	___	___
33.	It would not bother me if my wife earned more money than I did. It would not bother me if I earned more money than my husband.	___	___
34.	It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along. I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family).	___	___
35.	I get along with my fiance(e)'s parents (family). It is important to me that my spouse and my parents (family) get along.	___	___

		MALE	FEMALE
36.	When we argue, I feel that nothing is resolved.	___	___
37.	My fiance(e) does not plan to have a career. I am not planning to have a career.	___	___

APPENDIX 3

REACTION TO REVEALED POTENTIAL CONFLICT

This questionnaire is not designed to measure your satisfaction or happiness. Rather, it is designed to identify which of the differences that you have or had with your partner (on the questionnaire filled out two weeks ago) you feel are important, and which differences you feel are not very important.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Each question on which you and your partner answered differently on the Schulman questionnaire is listed below. In relation to each of those differences you are to read the possible responses (from the Response Sheet) and then pick the response which you believe best applies to your relationship.

Some of the possible responses seem very close. They are, however, all different. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU PICK THE RESPONSE THAT BEST FITS YOUR SITUATION, AS YOU SEE IT.

Please record your response by placing the letter of the chosen response in the blank next to each difference.

(If none of the possible responses adequately apply to your relationship please turn your difference sheet over and briefly describe your response in your own words).

RESPONSE SHEET

(A) Although this may be important in some people's relationship, I don't consider this to be important in our relationship. We probably will not discuss this.

(B) We have discussed this area to the point that we have an agreement about how we want to handle this area of our relationship.

(C) We have not yet discussed this to the point that we have an agreement about how we want to handle this area of our relationship, but as I see it, this is an important area for us to discuss and agree upon.

(D) We have decided that, although we have somewhat different ideas in this area, we can live with the differences. We have decided that the best way to handle this area is to sort of "agree to disagree."

(E) We have tried to discuss this, but usually either get side-tracked onto another subject or issue, stop discussing in this area before we cover much new ground, or get into an argument or disagreement. In general, we have trouble discussing in this area.

(F) At this point in our relationship I would like to discuss this area to the point that we reach an agreement, but I believe that my partner does not want to discuss this as much as I do.

(G) At this point in our relationship I do not think we need to discuss this. I believe my partner thinks it is more important than I do.

Part Two

At the time you filled out the Schulman questionnaire your wedding date was set for _____. At this point what is the status of your wedding?

The wedding:
(check one)

____(A) was (date)_____
____(B) is scheduled on the same date as at the time we filled out the Schulman questionnaire.
____(C) is off. We have broken up with each other.
____(D) is postponed. Has a date been set? ___yes ___no
____(E) is updated. We will be married earlier than the date given on the Schulman questionnaire.
____(F) is uncertain. Either my partner or me is unsure as to marriage. The decision to marry, or not to marry, has not been made.
____(G) other. (please specify)
_____

APPENDIX 4

POTENTIAL CONFLICT VALUES FOR RESPONSE COMBINATIONS

Response Combinations	Potential Conflict Value
a-a	0
a-b	1
a-c	3
a-d	1
a-e	4
a-f	3
a-g	1
b-b	0
b-c	2
b-d	1
b-e	4
b-f	2
b-g	1
c-c	1
c-d	3
c-e	4
c-f	1
c-g	2
d-d	0
d-e	4
d-f	3
d-g	1
e-e	4
e-f	4
e-g	4
f-f	2
f-g	2
g-g	1

APPENDIX 5

Age at First Marriage

Difference between median age of participants in this study and median age in 1978

	1978	this
♂	24.2	20
♀	21.8	19

$X^2 = .00$

Religion and Gender

	Catholic	Protestant	None
♀	13	8	1
♂	6	10	6

$X^2 = 4.04$; $p > .10$

Religion and Perceptual Category

	Catholic	Protestant	None
Ideal	12	8	3
Realistic	4	7	2
Pessimistic	3	3	2

$X^2 = .85$; $p = > .20$

Marital Preparation Classes and Gender

	Hi. Sc.	College	None
♂	0	8	13
♀	3	12	8

$X^2 = 2.4$; $p > .20$

Educational Level of the parents

	Hi. Sc.	1 yr. college	college grad.	post grad.
Father's	17	3	10	8
Mother's	19	6	11	1

$X^2 = 4.24$ $p > .20$

Parent's Marital Status and Gender of Participants

	Married and living tog.	Divorced
♂	20	1
♀	19	3

$X^2 = .13$ $p > .20$

Perceptual Category and Gender

	Ideal-istic	Real-istic	Pessi-mistic
♂	9	11	4
♀	15	5	4

$X^2 = 2.6$ $p > .20$

Perceptual Category and Marital Preparation

	High School Class	College Class	Church	None
Idealistic	3	13	0	10
Realistic	0	6	2	8
Pessimistic	0	3	2	3

$X^2 = 1.76$ p 7 .20

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