Conflict Resolution Processes in Close Relationships

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Introduction

Overview

Conflict seems unavoidable in our daily lives. When colleagues favor competing approaches, when seller and buyer disagree on the value of a good, when couples have different values for spending money, and when couples' career demands interfere with care of children, conflicts arise. Although conflicts are inevitable, many people will not admit there are conflicts, particularly in close relationships with friends or family members. "Conflict" is often viewed as implying an "unhappy relationship," especially in a marriage relationship, which is supposed to be so close and intimate that no conflict should exist.

In contrast to traditional lay views of conflict, a number of social scientists take a very different view about the role of conflict in interpersonal relationships (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1987; Deutsch, 1973). Johnson & Johnson (1987) posited that conflicts are inevitable and the issue is not whether conflicts can be prevented, but rather how they can be managed. Further, from the perspective of Johnson & Johnson (1987) conflicts have great positive potential and cna be beneficial when they are structured and managed carefully.

Unfortunately, however, many conflicts are not structured constructively; further, as Fincham and Bradbury (1987a) point out, the processes underlying conflict escalation in relationships are poorly understood, especially for close relationships. Clark and Reis (1989), in an examination of the relationship literature, report that:

> "eighty percent of the research of attraction and relationships involved subjects who
> were "personally irrelevant" to each other, in the sense that they had never met

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before, did not expect to see each other in the future, and might not come face-to-face during the study. .....Fortunately, with a turn toward more realistic laboratory and naturalistic research designs, ..., close relationships are once again riding a wave of growing enthusiasm. (p.1)"

Peterson (1983) also pointed out:

"Although the several literatures on conflict are extensive, they are not as enlightening as one might hope for understanding conflict in close relationships. .....the writings of clinicians consist mainly of untested theoretical statements about the origins and therapeutic management of conflict. The scientific literature is based on far more systematic inquiry than of clinicians, but, until recently, very little of it was derived from the investigation of conflict in close relationships. (p.363)"

In view of the preceding comments, a more systematic inquiry of conflict in close relationships is needed. In this research, a theoretical model is proposed to illuminate the processes of conflict resolution in close relationships, including individual differences, relationship norms, attributions, and influence strategies. A set of questionnaires has been developed, including measures of allocentrism-idiocentrism values and attitudes, exchange-orientation, exchange-communal behavior, marital attribution style, social influence strategies, and relationship quality. Samples are 100 Chinese couples in Twiwan, 100 Chinese couples in Minnesota, USA, and 100 American couples in Minnesota. The data are analyzed by a structural equation modeling research design, which essentially integrates confirmatory factor analysis with path analysis. That approach allows the degree to which a data set fits various conceptral model to be evaluated. Given the multi-cultural sample, the study also looks cross-culturally at conceptual models developed primarily in the United States.

A Model of Conflict Resolution Processes in Close Relationships

What causal parameters should be included in any model that attempts to map out and understand couples' conflict resolution processes, and hence relationship quality? Kelly, Berscheid, Christensen, Harvey, Huston, Levinger, Clintock, Peplau, and Peterson (1983) have proposed a comprehensive framework for researching close relationships as shown in Figure 1. This framework includes persons' interaction, causal conditions, interchain causal connections, and the various causal links among the conditions, and between those conditions and the events. In the framework, there are two kinds of causal conditions. Physical, social environmental and personal conditions (identified by the symbols Ephys, Esoc, P, and O) make

up one kind; another kind consists of relational conditions that exist only in the relation between environment and person or in the relation between two persons (identified by E*P or P*O).
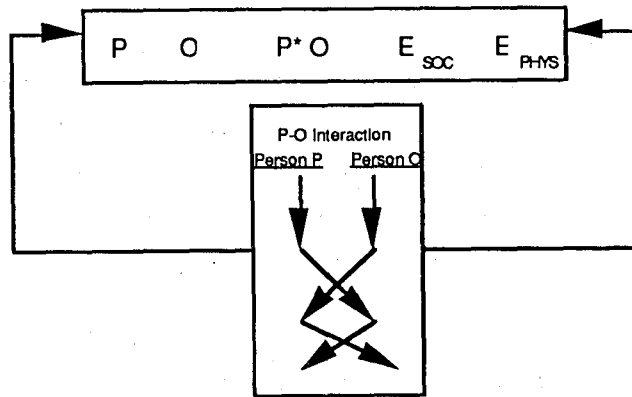

Figure 1. The research model for close relationship

As Kelly et al. (1983) pointed out, the internal causal structure of ther dyad and its context of causal conditions are very complex. No investigator studies the entire framework in all its complexity. Nor does any existing theory attempt to analyze it in a manner that is both comprehensive in scope and detailed in level. However, all investigators, all hypotheses, and all theories relating to dyadic interaction refer in one way or another to this broad framework or to its components.

In this research, subjects' attitudes toward gender role and their cultural values are included as persons' causal conditions (P, O), and the relationship norm is included as a relational causal condition (P*O) Attribution style, influence strategies and relationship quality are included as persons' interaction parameters (P-O interaction). Participants' gender and their different cultural and geographical backgrounds are viewed as social and physical environmental causal conditions (Esoc, Ephys).

A growing number of empirical studies has documented the association between attributions and marital satisfaction (e.g., Baucom, Bell, & Duhe, 1982; Fincham, 1985; Fincham, Beach, & Baucom, 1987; Fincham, Beach, & Nelson, 1987; Fincham & O'leary, 1983; Holtzworth-Munroe & Jacobson, 1985; Jacobson, McDonald, Follette, & Berley, 1985). For example, these studies show that relative to nondistressed spouses, distressed spouses view the causes of their partner's negative behavior as reflecting enduring, global characteristics of their partners (i.e., they make internal, stable, and global attributions). Distressed spouses also tend to view positive partner behavior as situationally determined and thus reflecting temporary, situation-specific causes (i.e., they make external, unstable, and specific attribu-

tions). In short, in distressed marriages, the pattern of attributions is less benign than in nondistressed marriages (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990).

However, the studies reviewed above do not address how these patterns of attributions affect marital satisfaction. More specifically, how do those spouses with different patterns of attributions deal with the conflicts perceived in their relationships? What kinds of influence strategies do they use in response to different patterns of attributions? Do diffeerent strategies lead to varied ways of conflict resolution/termination and marital satisfaction? Researchers dealing with influence strategies in close relatinships have also not typically addressed the effect of attrbutions on the kinds of influence strategies they choose. Instead, most researchers have been interested in who uses what influence strategies, or in developing the best classification scheme for influence strategies in intimate relationships (Falbo & Peplau, 1980). Further, most researchers have used macro-level structural indicators, such as sex, age, income, education, etc., and seldom have use micro-level interpersonal indicators, such as attribution patterns and relationship norms, etc. (Howard, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1986).

In this research, attributions and influence strategies are placed in the broader context of processes of conflict resolution in close relationships. Logically, how people define and explain their conflicts, and how they allocate responsibility, may affet how they choose influence strategies to deal with conflicts. It may follow, then, that their ways of resolving conflicts may affect the quality of their relationships. For example, people making more benign attributions about their spouses' behaviors may act more constructively in conflict; in turn, the quality of their relationships may be better than the relationships of those with less benign attributions.

In addition, research has not addressed why couples make different patterns of attributions. For example, why do some couples make more benign attributions than others? Relationship norms may be one factor, which can affect how people define, interpret, and allocate responsibility in their conflicts, and which can also determine the standards of fairness for evaluating conflict resolution.

In this research, the author adopts Clark and Mills' (1979) perspective on exchange oriented and communal oriented relationship norms, and views attributions as a mediating factor between relationship norms and marriage satisfaction. A communal oriented norm, for instance, may lead to benign attributions, whereas an exchange oriented norm may lead to less benign attributions in close relationships.

Furthermore, what distinguishes one type of relationship from another? According to Clark(1985), the type of relationship one has may either be culturally dictated, or freely chosen. Culture dictates, for instance, that communal norms are to be followed with family members. Regardless of whether we like or dislike our relatives, we are supposed to care about their welfare. Culture also dictates that exchange norms should be followed with people with whom we do business. People are socialized to adopt different kinds of relationship norms in different cultures. Thus, the model also includes cultural values, which can lead to adopting certain relationship norms. Especially during drastic social transition, norms have important implications for people's close relationships. For example, in collectivist cultures, inevitable modernization or westernization characterized by individualism forces people to undergo processes of cultural transition. During these processes, interpersonal relationship norms, especially close relationship norms, may be deeply affected. In dealing with their close relationships, people with idiocentric tendencies may define their close relationships as exchange relationships where equity is the prominent priciple. However, people with allocentric tendencies may define their close relationships as communal ones where a need principle is prominent.

Finally, gender roles are included because sex differences are primarily explained by traditional gender role norms. These roles are in transition, so gender role may explain more of the variation in social behavior than does sex. Traditional gender role norms indicate that men and women differ in power and, in turn, exert sex-typed tactics within intimate relationships. Since the women's movement has had a major impact on gender role norms, the relations among gender role identity, relationship norms, attributions, influence strategies, and marital satisfaction need to be examined systematically.

In view of the above principles and hypotheses, an initial theoretical model is set as Figure 2. A further discussion of each of the conceptual variables in the model follows in Chaper 2.
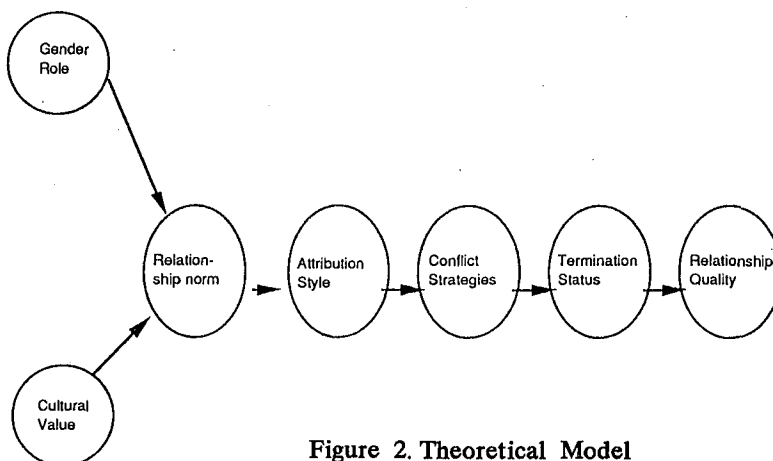

Figure 2. Theoretical Model

Methods

Structural Equation Model: An Overview

In Clark and Reis' (1989) review, structural equation modeling was suggested as a potentially useful research design for interpersonal relations researchers. This procedure essentially integrates confirmatory factor analysis with path analysis, and evaluates the degree to which a data set fits a given theoretical model. To handle two basic problems of scientific inference, measurement concern and causal relationships concern, structural equation modeling designs consist of two parts: the measurement model and the structural equation model. The measurement model specifies how the latent variables or hypothetical constructs are measured in terms of the observed variables, and it describes the measurement properties (validities and reliabilities) of the observed variables. The structural equation model specifies the causal relationships among the latent variables and describes the causal effects and the amount of unexplained variance (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989). Clark and Reis (1989) also concluded that structural equation modeling designs have four primary advantages. First, they permit examination of causal hypotheses with nonexperimental data. Second, by utilizing multiple indicators of the same latent construct, measurement is enhanced, both in terms of internal consistency and generalizability. Third, by focusing on models of the interrelationships among a set of variables rather than myriad simultaneous bivariate correlations, more sophisticated theoretical understandings are likely to emerge. Fourth, they facilitate explicit and direct tests of mediating processes (Judd & Kenny 1981), Which have in the past only been assumed indirectly.

Relations among The Constructs

In Figure 3, the eleven conceptual variables are (1)Gender Role; (2-3) Cultural Values and Attitudes; (4)Relationship Norms; (5)Atrribution Processes; (6-9)Influence Strategies: confront, yield, contend, withdraw; (10-14) Conflict Termination Status: Withdrawal, integrative agreement, domination, structural improvement, compromise, and (15) Relationship quality. The relationships among these theoretical variables are summarized in the following discussion:

Attributions have been viewed as a key factor in the underlying process of resolving conflict in close relationships. There are numerous studies reporting strong relations between

attributions and marital satisfaction. However, little attention has been paid to the antecedents of attributions, and factors that mediate relations between attributions and marital satisfaction. In this model, relationship norms are viewed as an antecedent factor to attributions and social influence strategies and conflict termination status factors are viewed as mediating the relationship between attributions and marital satisfaction. The path directly linking attrbution and relationship quality is added on this model in order to compare it with the mediating effects of influence strategy variables. Further, gender role, and culural values are viewed as important factors in determining relationship norms. Since it is not clear whether either of these variables causally influences the other, the model allows them to covary rather than trying to determine why they are related. In path diagrams, such a relationship is typically depicted by a double-headed curved arrow. Variables such as these three, whose causes are unknown or not of interest in the model, are termed exogenous. The rest of the variables are considered to be caused by other variables in the model; that is, they are endogenous. This model was tested for six different samples: Taiwan wife sample, Twiwan busband sample, Chinese wife in MN sample, Chinese husband in MN sample, American wife sample, and American husband sample. These sample scheme included implicit gender and cultural background variables, that sex and cultural differences are also discussed.

It has been argued that attributions are causally related to marital satisfaction (Baucom, 1987; Berley & Jacobson, 1984). That is, the pattern of internal, stable and global attributions of spouse's positive behavior, and the pattern of external, unstable, and specific attributions of spouse's negative behavior, lead to marital satisfaction. In contrast, tha alternative interpretation is that marital satisfaction influences attributions. Based on Fincham and Bradbury's longitudinal research results (1987), the attribution factor is viewed as the cause of marital satisfaction in this model.

Hypotheses:

1) Chinese people in Twiwan are more collectivistic, Chinese people in Minnesota, USA, are influenced by individualistic cultural values as well as collectivistic ones, and American people are more individualistic.

2) People who are male, masculine, and individualistic oriented tend to hold exchange relationship norms. On the other hand, people who are females, feminine or androgynous, and collectivistic oriented tend to hold non-exchange relationship norm.
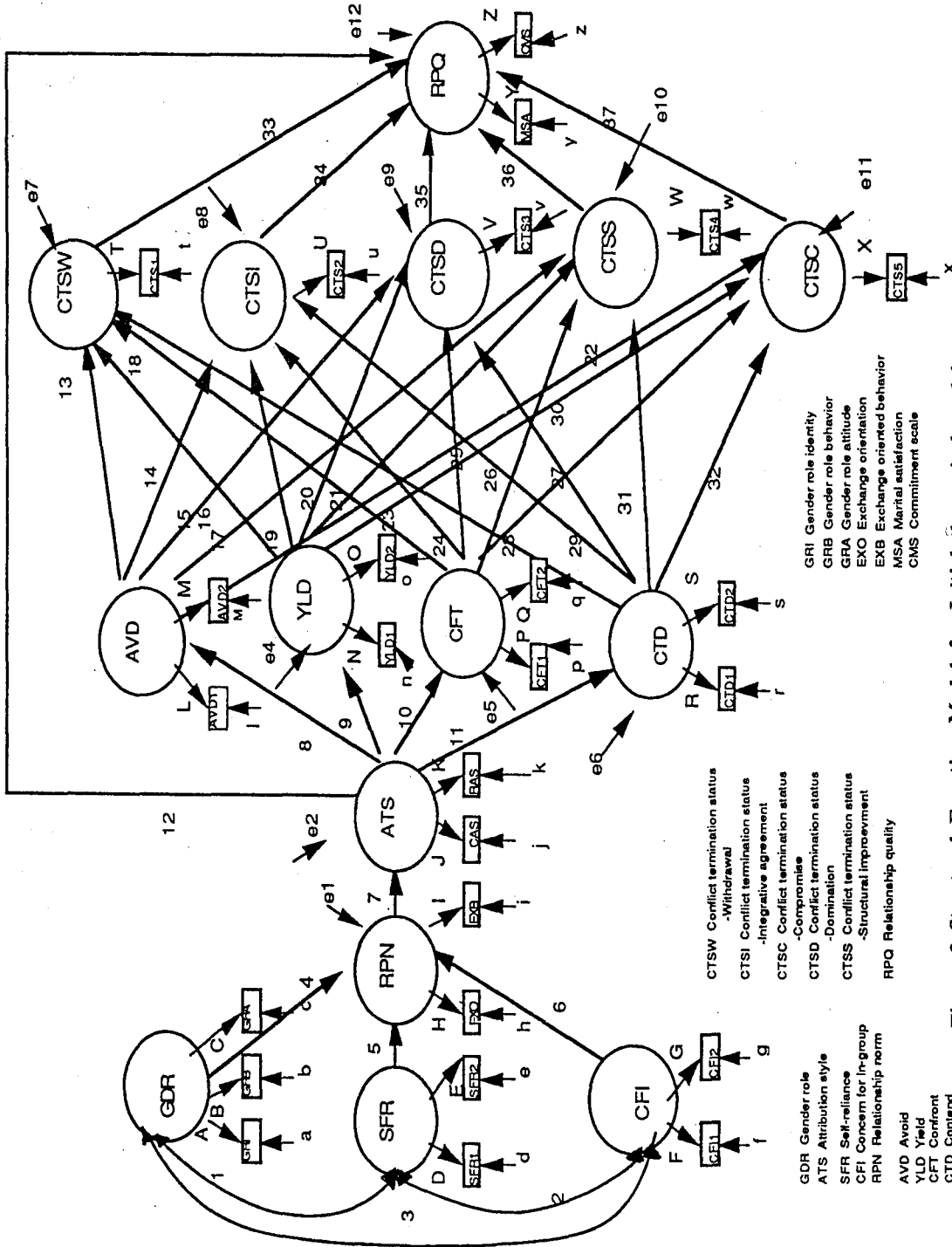
Figure 3. Structural Equation Model for Initial theoretical model

GDR Gender role
ATS Attribution style
SFR Self-reliance
CFI Concern for in-group
RPN Relationship norm

AVD Avoid
YLD Yield
CFT Confront
CTD Contend

CTSW Conflict termination status
-Withdrawal
CTSI Conflict termination status
-Integrative agreement
CTSC Conflict termination status
-Compromise
CTSD Conflict termination status
-Domination
CTSS Conflict termination status
-Structural improvement

RPQ Relationship quality

GRI Gender role identity
GRB Gender role behavior
GRA Gender role attitude
EXO Exchange orientation
EXB Exchange oriented behavior
MSA Marital satisfaction
CMS Commitment scale

3) When in conflict, people holding an exchange norm tend to have a less benign attribution style (i.e., internal, enduring, global, and partner blame for partner's negative behaviors) than those holding non-exchange norms.

4) People who have less benign attributions tend to use either a strong stragegy, such as contending or a withdrawal strategy to deal with their conflicts. In contrast, people who have benign attributions tend to use problem-solving strategies, such as confrontation, compromise, or yielding.

5) People who use problem solving strategies to resolve conflicts have a higher quality of relationship, than people using contending or withdrawal strategies.

In addition, in order to explore the relations among variables described in Hypotheses 2-5 and to provide multivariate tests, Structural Equation Modeling designs look at all hypotheses together.

SamplesSubjects are 100 Chinese couples in Taiwan, 100 Chinese couples in Minnesota, and 100 American couples. Two thirds were recruited from the University of Minnesota's Commonwealth Terrace Community (C.T.C.) and Como married student housing, and personal networks in Minnesota. Another one third were recruited from elementary and junior high school teachers and their spouses in Twiwan. The sample characteristics are summarized as follows:

Table 1 Sample Characteristics

	Age M	Education Hs/Col/Grad	Vocation Hm/St/Non-st	Religion Bud/Chr/No	# of children M	year of marriage M	Time being married
Sample 1	36.58	7% 90% 3%	11% 6% 83%	53% 0% 42%	1.80	9.87	1st
Sample 2	39.04	3% 87% 10%	0% 4% 96%	55% 4% 41%	1.80	9.87	1st
Sample 3	34.41	0% 43% 56%	39% 41% 20%	15% 25% 59%	1.00	7.48	1st
Sample 4	35.83	1% 3% 95%	3% 72% 24%	17% 24% 59%	1.00	7.41	1st
Sample 5	35.78	2% 45% 55%	21% 30% 49%	0% 90% 10%	1.70	11.13	4%2nd
Sample 6	37.04	4% 39% 57%	1% 33% 66%	2% 79% 19%	1.70	11.06	6%2nd

Note. 91% of the sample are paired couples.
S1=Taiwan wife sample S2=Taiwan husband sample S3=Chinese wife in Minnesota sample
S4=Chinese husband in Minnesota sample S5=American wife in Minnesota sample S6=American husband in Minnesota sample.
Hs=High school Col=College Grad=Graduate school Hm=Home maker St=Student Non-st=Non-student

In general, the six samples in this research are around 35 years old, college-ducated, within their first marriage of about 10 years, and parents of 1 or 2 children. However, there

are some differences among these samples. Samples 3 and 4 are younger than the other samples, have fewer children, a shorter duration of marriage, and are more highly educated. Most of sample 3 and 4 are graduate students and professionals. There are also some differences in religious background, where most American couples practice Christianity (90%79%), most Taiwan couples practice Buddhism (53%/55%), and most Chinese couples in Minnesota practice no religion at all (59%/59%).

procedure.

1) Instruments were translated to Chinese, in order to get more valid responses from Chinese couples for whom English is a second language, and back translated from Chinese to English. Whether the English or Chinese version should be applied was based on the participants' native language, and also was the criteria for defining Chinese couples vs American couples.

2) For the sample of American and Chinese couples in C.T.C. and Como, potential samples' addresses and telephone numbers were found in CTC and Como residents' directories. Before visiting, the researcher contacted potential participants, asking them to fill out a set of questionnaires. Most materials were hand-delivered to participanits, and collected by the researcher, in order to increase response rate and to save mailing expenses.

3) For part of the Chinese sample in Taiwan, teachers in Teacher Colleges in Taiwan helped the researcher collect data from their students, who were in teacher-training classes for new and returning elementary school teachers.

4) For part of the American sample, American friends of the researcher helped collect data from their friends, colleagues, and relatives.

Measures Used To Define the Theoretical Variables

Turning again to Figure 3, the rectangles represent the observed measures of each theoretical variable. As shown, each of the theoretical variables in the model has been defined by two or more indicators. The indicators of gender role are gender role identity, attitude, and behavior. Indicators of cultural value and attitude are Individualism-Collectivism Attitude Scale, and Idiocentrism-Allocentrism Value scale. The indicators of relationship

norm are Exchange Orientation Scale and Exchange-Communal Behavior Inventory. Indicators of attribution process are the Causal Attribution Index and Responsibility Attribution Index; those for influence strategies are Conflict Handling Style Scale and Influence Means Scale. Finally, the indicators of relationship quality are Marital Satisfaction Scale, and Commitment Scale.

Instrumentation (The numbers in parentheses are the item numbers in the questionnaire.)

1) Cultural Values and Attitudes

"Self-Reliance"; "Concern for Ingroup" (4-23). To measure cultural values and attitudes, the author adopted the 14 items from Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asal, and Luca's (1988) Allocentrism-Idiocentrism Attitude Scale, and the 9 items from Triandis et al.'s (1985) Allocentrism-Idiocentrism Value Scale. According to Triandis et al.'s (1988), the construct of Allocentrism-Idiocentrism is a multi-dimensional construct. Therefore, separating the whole sample into two random samples with 300 subjects each, the author used factor analysis to confirm the theoretical structure of items, and two major factors were found. One is "Self Reliance", and the other is "Concern for Ingroup". The results were also consistent with Triandis et al.'s (1988) findings. Eight items (items 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18) were selected based on the highest loadings coverging with two random samples and rotated and non-rotated solutions (see Appendix B). Two mesures of SFR1 and SFR2 are indicators of the Self-Reliance factor, the other two measures of CFI1 and CEI2 are indicators of the Concern for In-group factor. The SFR1 includes item 9 and item 18, and the reliability coefficient alpha was. 43. The SFR2 includes item 5 and item 15, and the reliability coefficient alpha was. 44. The CFI1 includes item 8 and item 6, and the reliability coefficient alpha was. 49. The CFI2 includes item 11 and item 16, and the reliability coefficient alpha was. 38.

Besides the reliability coefficient alpha, the loadings in the measurement model of this reasearch also provide reliabilities. The loadings for SFR1, SFR2, CFI1, and CFI2 were around. 32-.41;. 91;. 48-.65; and .23-.24, respectively, for the six subsamples (see Appendix D).

2) Relationship Norms-Exchange orientation; Exchange Behavior

The Exchange-Orientation Scale (24-42). The scale was developed by Murstein, Cerreto, and

MacDonald (1977), and consisted of nineteen items, which accorded with the definition of 'exchange'. All items were judged to be related to exchange by a panel of four judges consisting of two of the authors and two students. The items were rated by the subjects on a five-point scale, from strongly-agree to strongly-disagree. Split-half reliability corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula was. 69. The reliability coefficient alpha for the present sample was. 72. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around. 77 for the six subsamples.

Exchange-Communal Behavior Inventory (43-50). This eight item inventory was developed by the present author, based on Clark's (1986) theory. Clark proposed that there are specific classes of behaviors, and the communal/exchange distinction implies that they should have differential impact on compatibility, depending upon relationship type. Clark (1985) organized these behaviors into two groups:(1) behaviors that follow from exchange norms, and (2) behaviors that follow from communal norms (see p.20). The reliability coefficient alpha for the present sample was. 47. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around. 35-.69 for the six subsamples.

3) Marital Attribution Style Questionnaire

"Causal Attribution Style"; "Responsibility attribution Style" (51-64). This questionnaire was developed by Bradbury and Fincham (1989) to assess the attributions for hypothetical spouse behaviors. Only negative events were assessed because these are more likely to prompt attribution processing. Five negative spouse behviors were included as standard stimulus events. Three causal attribution dimensions (locus of cause in partner, causal stability, and causal globality) and three responsibility dimensions (extent to which behavior was seen as intended, negatively motivated, and blameworthy) were assessed for each of the five behaviors. Spouses were asked to indicate their agreement versus disagreement with a statement pertaining to each of the dimensions for each stimulus behavior (e.g., for the causal dimension of globality: "The reasons my partner criticized me is something that affects other areas of our marriage").

Index Construction

In addition to the individual attribution dimensions, Bradbury and Fincham (1989) also assessed the pattern of attributions, across the dimensions (e.g., the extent to which spouses locate a cause in the partner and consider it global and stable), emphasized in theoretical

statements and interpretations of past · findings. Consequently, they constructed cross-dimensional attribution indices as follows.

An Overall Index of Causal Attribution. Bradbury and Fincham (1989) summed the 15 questions pertaining to causation (5 stimulus events; 3 questions). The causal attribution index indicated the extent to which spouses viewed the causes in a manner likely to maximize the impact of the event (i.e., locating the cause in the spouse and seeing it as stable and global). In this research, because of the questionnaire's length, the present author chose only two stimulus events. In addition, the author added one item of causal dimension, which is 'locus of cause in self', as Bradbury and Fincham (1989) suggested. This item was reverse coded to exclude the self-blaming factor which may confound the self-serving and other-blaming pattern. Therefore, the index is the sum of 8 questions (2 stimulus; 4 questions). The CAS represents the measure of Causal Attribution Style Index, including item 51 to item 54, and item 58 to item 61. The reliability coefficient alpha was .55 for this research sample. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around. 63-.70 for the six subsamples.

A Responsibility Attribution Index. The responsibility attribution index was canstructed in the same manner and similarly indicated the extent to which spouses made less benign attributions (saw behavior as intentional, worthy of blame, and reflective of selfish concerns).

In this research, because of the questionnaire's length, the author chose only two stimulus events; their index is the sum of 6 questions (2 stimulus; 3 questions).

According to Bradury & Fincham (1989), these attribution indices showed satisfactory reliability for husbands (coefficient alphas: for causal index = .84; for responsibility index = .89) and for wives (causal index =.86; responsibility index =.84)

The RAS represents the measure of Responsibility Attribution Index, including item 55 to item 57, and item 62 to item 64. The reliability coefficient alpha was. 78 for this research sample. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around. 69-.83 for the six subsamples.

4) Social Influence Strategies- "Withdraw", "Yield", "Confront", "Contend" (65-79) (80-95)

Two measures of these constructs were collected from the Johnson & Johnson (1987) "Conflict Handling Inventory", and the Kipnis, Castell, Gergen, and Mauch (1976) "Influence

Means Scales". In order to make these two measures comparable, the author classified the items for each scale into five categories, namely, "Withdraw", "Yield", "Compromise", "Confront", and "Contend", based on Pruitt and Rubins'(1987) theory. Later, the author used factor analysis to confirm these constructs. For each scale, the author separated the whole sample into two random samples, and cross validated the results of factor analysis. All the factors were confirmed except "Compromise", which was split into some other factors. Therefore, four strategies remain, insted of five: "Withdraw", "Yield", "Confront", and "Contend". Eight final items for each scale were selected based on the highest factor loadings converging with two random samples, rotated and non-rotated solution. (see Appendix C). Each strategy construct has two indicators from "Influence Means Scale" and "Conflict Handling Inventory", and two items in each indicator.

The AVD1 (item 88, item 92) and AVD2 (item89, item 95) represent two indicators of the "Avoid" factor, and the reliability coefficient alphas were .66 and .35, respectively. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around .47, and 28-.68 for the six subsamples.

The YLD1 (item 66, item 73) and YLD2 (item 69, item 79) represent two indicators of the "Yield" factor, and the reliability coefficient alphas were .66 and .35, respectively. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around .41-.74; and .64-.72 for the six subsamples.

CFT1 (item 84, item 87) and CFT2 (item75, item 67) represent two indicators of the "Confront" factor, and the reliability coefficient alphas were .68 and .52, respectively. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around .38-.72 for the six subsamples.

CTD1 (item 74, item 78) and CTD2 (item 83, item 90) rearesent two indicators of the "Contend" factor, and the reliability coefficient alphas were .38 and .29, respectively. The loadings in the reaearch model of this research were around .18-.48 for the six subsamples.

5) Conflict Termination Status Scale (96-101)

This 5-point, Likert style scale was developed by the author, based on Peterson's (1983) theory. There are five kinds of endings of conflict in close relationships, namely separtion, domination, compromise, integrative agreement, and structural improvement. These

are, roughly, ordered from the most destructive to the most constructive. Endings were rated by asking spouses to indicate how often their marital conflicts end in each way after reading definitions of each ending.

6) Relationship Quality-Marital Satisfaction; Commitment

Marital Adjustment Test (102-117). This test was devised by Locke & Wallace (1959), to measure marital satisfaction. It has well-established psychometric properties and discriminates between nondistressed spouses and spouses who have documented marital problems. The reliability coefficient alpha was .68 based on this research sample.

Commitment Scale (117-136).The 19 item, 5-point, Likert style scale was developed by Murstein and MacDonald (1983). The split-half reliability was .92. The reliability coefficient alpha was .76, based on this research sample. The loadings in the measurement model of this research were around .65-.75 for the six subsamples.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Results and Initial Hypotheses Test

Tables 2 and 3 show the means of the theoretical variables and the correlations among demographic variables and theoretical variables, respectively. Cultural background, gender, age, eduction level, and other family life related variables such as duration of marriage, number of children, and family life cycle all have significant relationships with most of theoretical variables in the research model.

First, by looking at the mean differences, compared to other samples, couples in Taiwan tended to use more avoiding and yielding stragegies, Chinese couples in Minnesota tended to use more yielding and confrontation strategies, and American couples used more confrontation strategies (see Table 2). These differences were significant, tested by the correlations between cultural background and influence strategy factors (see Table 3).

Table 2 Means of Theoretical Variables for Six Samples

	S1 (n=101)	S2 (n=99)	S3 (n=103)	S4 (n=97)	S5 (n=102)	S6 (n=98)
Gender Role						
GRI	2.55	2.70	2.41	2.74	2.67	2.75
GRB	2.60	2.53	2.23	2.29	2.20	2.53
GRA	2.48	2.65	2.56	2.50	2.15	2.56
Self-Reliance						
SFR1	8.38	8.68	8.42	8.64	6.82	7.09
SFR2	7.15	7.42	7.71	7.63	5.28	5.42
Concern For In-group						
CFI1	3.75	4.12	4.18	4.46	4.06	4.67
CFI2	4.25	4.56	4.53	4.79	4.64	5.43
Relationship Norm						
EXO	54.98	52.83	53.98	50.98	46.39	44.99
EXB	20.97	19.19	19.35	18.50	17.75	16.93
Attribution Style						
CAS	23.71	23.40	23.33	23.39	24.66	23.62
RAS	16.21	13.97	14.88	14.23	15.16	13.71
Influence Strategies						
AVD	2.32	2.28	1.97	2.18	1.66	1.88
YLD	3.61	3.60	3.38	3.38	3.08	3.25
CTD	2.40	2.51	2.22	2.24	2.24	2.30
CFT	3.28	3.22	3.39	3.29	3.45	3.37
Conflict Termination Status						
CTSW	1.95	2.05	1.90	1.80	2.61	2.43
CTSI	3.37	3.28	3.23	3.17	3.15	3.11
CTD	2.80	2.47	2.57	2.65	2.45	2.04
CTSS	3.15	2.94	2.78	2.82	2.64	2.56
CTSC	2.80	2.74	2.53	2.58	3.15	3.21
Relationship Qulity						
MSA	103.95	104.04	104.21	107.58	114.57	110.29
CMS	69.78	70.69	68.10	71.07	68.74	72.26

Note The numbr of each influence strategy is the mean score of four items from both indicators S1=Taiwan wife sample S2=Taiwan husband sample S3=Chinese wife in Minnesota sample S4=Chinese busband in Minnesota sample S5=American wife in Minnesota sample S6=American husband in Minnesota sample.

Table 3 Pearson corerelations for Demographic Variables and Theoretical Variables (N=600)

	Gender Role			Self–Reliance		Concern For In–group		Relationship Norm	
	GRI	GRB	GRA	SFR1	SFR2	CFI1	CFI2	EXO	EXB
Gender	.11**	.07*	.12*	.09*	.03ns	-.15**	-.15**	-.12**	-1.6**
cultural(1) background	.04ns	-.11**	-.12**	-.46**	-.44**	-.12**	-.17**	-.43**	-3.1**
Cultural(2) background	.06ns	-.03ns	-.13**	-.53**	-.56**	-.08*	-.16**	-.46**	-.28**
Age	-.06ns	-.06ns	-.06ns	.01ns	-.00ns	.042ns	.10**	.07*	-.01ns
Religion (1)	.04ns	-.04ns	-.05ns	.02ns	-.04ns	.10**	-.05ns	.09*	.05ns
Religion (2)	.00ns	-.00ns	.11**	.09*	.18**	-.03ns	.02ns	.22**	.12**
Nationality	.03ns	-.02ns	-.05ns	-.42**	.37**	.10**	.11**	-.33**	-.21**
Education	.02ns	.10**	.03**	-.09*	-.13**	.02ns	-.11**	-.09*	-.12**
Years of marriage	-.06ns	-.10**	-.10**	-.05ns	-.08*	.03ns	.07*	-.01ns	-.02ns
Number of children	-.05ns	-.15**	-.17**	-.07*	-.03ns	-.05ns	.02ns	.07ns	-.02ns
Family life cycle	.05ns	-.15**	-.10**	.04ns	.10**	-.05ns	-.08*	.16**	.03ns
Time of being married	-.04ns	-.02ns	.05ns	-.07ns	-.03ns	-.03ns	-.03ns	.01ns	.01ns

	Attribution Style		Influence Strategies							
	CAS	RAS	AVD1	AVD2	YLD1	YLD2	CFT1	CFT2	CTD1	CTD2
Gender	-.06ns	-.18**	.08*	.08*	.02ns	.04ns	-.05ns	-.06ns	.00ns	-.3ns
cultural(1) background	.06ns	-.07*	-.27**	-.25**	-.07*	.36**	.01ns	.17**	-.24**	.20**
Cultural(2) background	.09*	-.05ns	-.26**	-.22**	-.00ns	-.38**	.03ns	.13**	-.22**	.23**
Age	.11**	.07*	.17**	.07*	.00ns	-.04ns	-.15**	-.20**	.13**	-.10**
Religion (1)	.01ns	.02ns	.01ns	-.04ns	-.07ns	-.08*	-.04ns	-.03ns	-.02ns	.03ns
Religion (2)	.05ns	.05ns	.10**	.07*	-.03ns	.05ns	-.03ns	-.08*	.08*	-.02ns
Nationality	.08*	-.03ns	-.17**	-.16**	.01ns	-.27**	.01ns	.08*	-.16**	.20**
Education	-.03ns	-.06ns	-.08*	-.05ns	-.09*	-.10**	.04ns	.07*	-.09*	.03ns
Years of marriage	.09*	.06ns	.10**	.05ns	.02ns	-.06ns	-.10**	-.05**	.11**	-.05ns
Number of children	.11**	.10**	.12**	.10**	.01ns	-.04ns	-.09*	-.14**	.09*	-.03ns
Family life cycle	.09*	.12**	.09*	.09*	.02ns	.04ns	-.05ns	-.05ns	.08*	-.02ns
Time of being married	.01ns	.06ns	-.00ns	.05ns	.03ns	.02ns	-.02ns	-.05ns	.11**	.03ns

	Conflict Termination Status					Relationship Quality	
	CTSW	CTSI	CTSD	CTSS	CTSC	MSA	CMS
Gender	−.03ns	−.03ns	−.11**	−.04ns	.09ns	−.01ns	.17**
cultural(1) background	.21**	−.08*	−.15**	−.19**	−.18**	.15**	−.01ns
Cultural(2) background	.28**	−.06ns	−.17**	−.16**	.26**	.16**	.04ns
Age	.13**	.15**	.01ns	−.05ns	.05ns	−.14**	−.12**
Religion (1)	−.01ns	−.06ns	.02ns	−.05ns	.00ns	−.08*	−.13**
Religion (2)	−.06ns	−.00ns	.06ns	.01ns	−.03ns	−.11**	−.11**
Nationality	.21**	−.07*	−.15**	−.15**	.21**	.13**	.01ns
Education	−.02ns	−.02ns	−.07*	−.06ns	−.04ns	.08*−	−.2ns
Years of marriage	.14**	−.11**	−.02ns	−.06ns	−.00ns	−.06ns	−.07*
Number of children	.14**	−.11**	.07*	.04ns	−.06ns	−.13**	−.06ns
Family life cycle	.03ns	−.02ns	.07*	.04ns	−.06ns	−.14**	−.04ns
Time of being married	.03ns	.02ns	−.04ns	.05ns	.07ns	−.00ns	−.02ns

Note: Gender was coded as 1 for female; 2 for male. Cultural background(1)
was coded as 1 for Taiwan couples, 2 for Chinese couples in MN and 3 for
Amercian couples, which is along the dimension of westernalization.
Cultural background(2) was coded as 1 for Chinese and 2 for American.
Religion(1) was coded as 1 for atheism; 2 for christian or catholic; 3 for
budhism. Religion(2) was coded as 1 for religion believers and 2 for
atheists. Nationality was coded as 1 for Taiwan Republic of China; 2 for
People Republic of China; 3 for USA, along the extent of gender equality
socialization. Education was coded as 1 for 'high school or lower'; 2 for
'college'; 3 for than 'graduate school'. Family life cycle was coded as 1
for 'no children at all'; 2 for 'the youngest child age is greater than
18'; 3 for 'the youngest child's age is between13 to 18'; 4 for 'the
youngest child's age is between 6 and 12'; 5 for 'the youngest child's age
is less than 6', alomg the contiunm of family stress.
*P=.05 significant at .05 level.
**P=.01 signicant at .01 level.
ns non-significant

In terms of marital satisfation then, American couples scored highest. Chinese couples in Minnesota scored the next highest, and Taiwan couples scored lowest (see Table 2), and the correlations between cultural background and marital satisfaction were statistically significant. In terms of commitment, however, Taiwan couples scored highest, then Chinese couples in MN, and American couples scored lowest. The correlation between cultural background and commitment, however, is not statistically significant.

Contrary to Triandis et al.'s (1988) Individualism-Collectivism theory, in this research Taiwan couples had the highest self-reliance cultural values, exchanging relationship norms, and other-blaming attribution styles, followed by Chinese couples in Minnesota, with American couples lowest. These differences were statistically significant, tested by the correlations between culturl background, relationship norms, and attribution styles variables (see Tables 2-3). Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Although surprising, the findings could perhaps reflect the non-radom sampling methods, or may in some other way be non-representative of the respective populations.

Second, along with cultural differences, gender differences are also noted (see Table 3). Gender was significantly related to relationship norms, attribution styles, and relationship quality. Compared to husbands, wives reported higher exchanging norms and other-blaming attribution styles, and less commitment to their relationships. Hypothesis 2 was not supported. There were no gender differences in reported choice of "strong" or "weak" influence strategies, which doesn't correspond to previous studies (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Kipnis, 1976). Also there were no gender difference in marital satisfaction, which is interesting compared with previous research describing women as less happy than men in their marriages, and as having less positive feelings about being married (Bernard, 1972; Gove, 1972a, 1972b, 1973; Hamilton, 1929; Horwitz, 1982; Knupfer et al., 1980; Radloff, 1975; Sporakowski & Hughston, 1978; Veroff et al., 1981). However, the correlation between gender and commitment was statistically significant, where wives felt less committed to their marital relationships.

Re-examining the gender correlations within each cultural background, the relationship between gender and reported commitment is significant only in the American couples and the Chinese couples in MN (Table 4). For Taiwan wives in comparison to their husbands, although they reported higher exchanging norms and other-blaming attribution styles, their reported levels of marital satisfaction and commitment were the same as their husbands'.

Table 4 Pearson Correlations for Gender, Relationship Norm, Attribution Style, Influence Strategies, and Relationship Quality within Each Cultural Background

	Influence strategies							
	AVD1	AVD2	YLD1	YLD2	CFT1	CFT2	CTD1	CTD2
Taiwan Couples								
Gender	-.00ns	-.04ns	-.03ns	.02ns	-.07ns	.01ns	-.10ns	-.08ns
Chinese Couples in MN								
Gender	.10ns	.14*	-.02ns	.01ns	-.01ns	-.10ns	.06ns	-.04ns
American Couples								
Gender	.16*	.16*	.10ns	.10ns	-.06ns	-.10ns	.05ns	.03ns

	Relationship Norn		Attribution Style		Relationship Quality	
	EXO	EXB	CAS	RAS	MSA	CMS
Taiwan Couples						
Gender	-.17*	-.25**	-.04ns	-.29**	.00ns	.07ns
Chinese Couples in MN						
Gender	-.14*	-.13*	.08ns	-.08ns	.07ns	.20*
American Couples						
Gender	-.09ns	-.12*	-.15*	-.18ns	-.10ns	.24**

Note. Gender was coded as 1 for female; 2 for male
* P=.05 significant at .05 level
** P=.01 significant at .01 level
ns non-significant

Third, people who are older tended to report more exchange oriented relationship norms, and more avoiding and less confrontation strategies, and are less satisfied in and less committed to their martal relationships (see Table 3).

Fourth, people who have higher levels of education tended to report more communal relationship norms, more confrotation and less avoiding and yielding strategies, and more satisfaction in their marital relationships (see Table 3).

In addition, duration of marriage, number of children, and family life cycle were also significantly correlated with most of the theoretical variables. People who were married longer, tended to report more traditional gender role attitudes and behaviors, a more self-serving attribution style, and reported being more likely to avoid and contend and less likely to confront in marital conflicts, and to feel less committed to their marital relationships.

People who have more children or have younger children at home, also tended to report more traditional gender role attitudes and behaviors, more self-serving and spouse-blaming attribution styles, more avoiding and less confrontation strategies, reported ending conflicts with unconstructive solutions like withdrawal or one-way domination, and less satisfaction in their marital relationships.

Table 5 shows the correlations among gender, gender role, self-reliance and concern for in-group values, and relationship norms. The results do not support hypothesis 2. Gender, gender role, and cultural value measures were not significantly correlated with relationship norm measures.

Table 5 Pearson Correlations for Gender, Gender Role, Self-Reliance, Concern For In-group, and Relationship Norm (N=600)

				Gender Role		Self-Reliance		Concern For In-group	
		Gender	GRI	GRB	GRA	SFR1	SFR2	CFI1	CFI2
Relationship	EXO	-.12**	-.01ns	-.04ns	.06ns	.05ns	.02ns	.03ns	-.03ns
Norm	EXB	-.16**	-.04ns	-.00ns	.03ns	.07ns	.11**	.09*	.04ns

Table 6 shows the correlations between relationship norm measures and attribution style measures. The results strongly support hypothesis 3. People reporting more exchange relationship norms, also tended to report more self-serving and spouse blaming attribution styles when they were in marital conflicts.

TAble 6 Pearson Correlations between Attribution Style and Relationship Norm (N=600)

		Attribution Style	
		CAS	RAS
Relationship	EXO	.35**	.15**
Norm	EXB	.49**	.36**

Table 7 shows the correlations between the measures of attribution style, influence strategies, conflict termination status, and relationship quality. The results strongly support hypotheses 4 and 5. People who reported more exchange relationship norms, tended to report using more avoiding and contending strategies and less yielding and confrontation strategies, and that their conflicts were more likely to end with less constructive solutions such as withdrawal and one way domination.

Table 7 Pearson Correlations for Influence Strategies, Conflict Termination Status, and Relationship Quality (N=600)

		Influence Strategies							
		AVD1	AVD2	YLD1	YLD2	CFT1	CFT2	CTD1	CTD2
Attribution Style	CAS	.09*	.07ns	−.13**	−.21**	−.28**	−.11**	.09*	.18**
	RAS	.15**	.16**	−.11**	−.17**	−.25**	−.10**	.18**	.19**
Relationship Quality	MSA	−.20**	−.12**	.22**	.23**	.41**	.25**	−.26**	−.09*
	CMS	−.07*	.10**	.29**	.33**	.32**	.15**	−.13**	−.03ns

		Conflict Termination Status				
		CTSW	CTSI	CTSD	CTSS	CTSC
Attribution Style	CAS	.29**	−.27**	.25**	−.08*	.08*
	RAS	.25**	−.22**	.29**	−.05ns	−.01ns
Relationship Quality	MSA	−.32**	.34**	−.32**	.13**	.12**
	CMS	−.27**	.32**	−.15**	.15**	.06ns

People who repoted using more avoiding or contending strategies in their marital conflicts, tended to report less satisfaction with and less committment to their marital relationships. In contrast, people who reported using more yielding or confrontation strategies, tended to report more satisfaction in and more committment to their marital relationships. In addition, the solutions of withdrawal and one-way domination were negatively correlated with relationsip quality, and the solutions of integrative agreement, structural improvement, and compromise were positively correlated with relationship quality.

Initial Structural Equation Modeling Results and Modifications

Initial analyses of the six subsamples (Taiwan wives, Taiwan husbands, Chinese wives in Minnesota, Chinese husbands in Minnesota, American wives, and American husbands) indicated moderate fit, but suggested several modications of the a prior model. The original models (see Figure 2) advanced a number of paths from the Gender Role and the Cultrual Values Factors to the Relationship Norms Factor. These paths were not supported in all six samples. As a result, the Gender Role, Cultural Value, and the five single measure Conflict Termination Status Factors were dropped in final revised models (see Figure 4) in order to improve the models' plausibility.
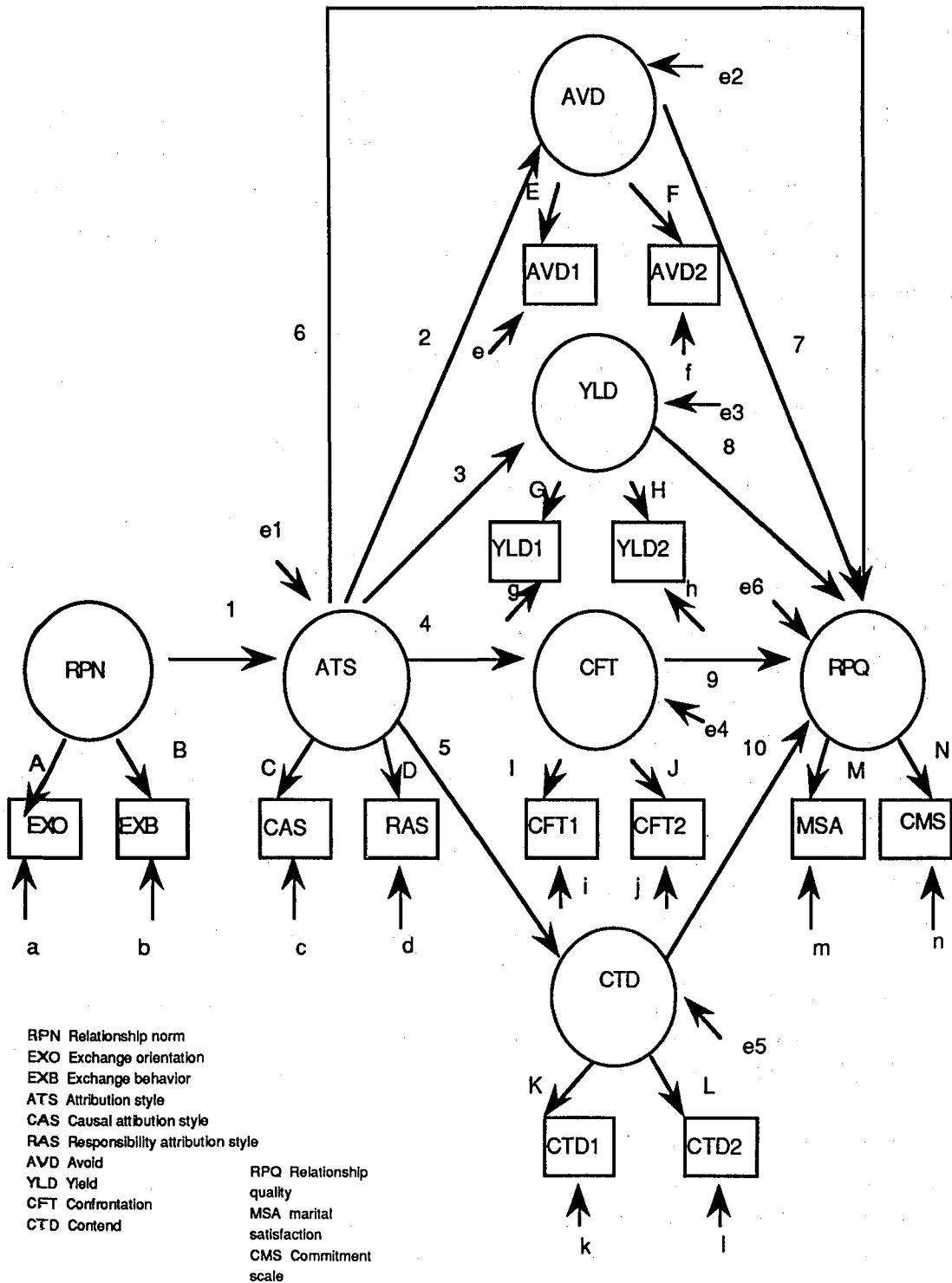
Figure 4. Structural Equation Model for revised theoretical model

Respecification and Final Models

Estimation of the final models found nonsignificant negative variance estimates for the residuals of some measures; to eliminate these problem, the negative residual variances were fixed to zero (see Joreskog, 1967). However, there is still some debate about whether or not to fix negative residual variances to zero, or to leave them, provided they are non-significant. The author estimated the models both ways. In this section, the initial solutions without fixing any negative residual variances are reported, and the modified solutions with fixing of negative residual variances to zero are reported in appendeces F-G. Results from both solutions were very similar except for two paths, path 6 in American wife sample and path 2 in Taiwan busband sample, which were affected by the modification. Path 6 changed from significant to non-significant in the American wife sample, and path 2 from non-significant to significant in the Taiwan husband sample.

Table 8 shows for each of the six samples the revised models' measurement model (see Figure 4), which links observed measures to the underlying dimensions. The measurement model indicated that the specification of underlying variables seems reasonable insofar as all the loadings were substantial, with the exception of the measure of "contend" and "avoid" influence strategies. Furthermore, the underlying variables were quite distinct from the measures, in that the residual variances of each of the measures were significant, with the exception of a few influence strategy measures (i.e., AVD1, CFT1, and CTD1).

Because the measurement model is reasonable, we can turn to the structural model, which is conceptually more interesting because it interrelates the underlying variables. Table 9 shows the values for the structural model, which interrelates underlying dimensions.

The common elements in the solutions for six samples show that several paths were significant. The paths with the most substantial loading were (1) RPN-ATS, (2) ATS-AVD, (3) ATS-YLD, (4)ATS-CFT, (5) ATS-CTD, and (6) ATS-QRP (see figure 4).

Path 1 indicates a strong positive relation between relationship norm and attribution style. This relation shows that people's definitions of the nature of their marital relationships affected their attributions during their conflicts with their spouses. Hypothesis 3 is supported, where couples holding more exchange relational norms attributed their marital conflicts in more self-serving and spouse-blaming way.

Table 8

Estimates of Variables in Figure 2 for Six Samples - Measurement Models, Scaled Solutions

Measure path	Loadings S1 (n=101)	S2 (n=98)	S3 (n=103)	S4 (n=97)	S5 (n=102)	S6 (n=98)	Variances (paths)	Residuals S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
EXO(A)	.814a	.682a	.726**	.780**	1.11**	.912a	EXO(a)	.338ns	.535**	.473**	.391**	-.24ns	.168ns
EXB(B)	.394**	.674**	.490a	.691a	.358a	.386**	EXB(b)	.845**	.545**	.760**	.552**	.872**	.851**
CAS(C)	.719**	.573**	.747**	.671**	.608**	.654**	CAS(c)	.482**	.671**	.443**	.550**	.630**	.572**
RAS(D)	.738a	.818a	.802a	.616a	.695a	.803a	RAS(d)	.455**	.330**	.357**	.621**	.517**	.355**
AVD1(E)	.304ns	.053ns	1.12a	.798a	.647a	4.116a	AVD1(e)	.908**	.997**	-.25ns	.364ns	.581**	-.16ns
AVD2(F)	.976a	7.020a	.252ns	.564ns	.790ns	.047ns	AVD2(f)	.048NS	-.48ns	.937**	.681**	.376ns	.998**
YLD1(G)	.440ns	.528**	.635a	.518a	.916a	.723**	YLD1(g)	.806**	.721**	.596**	.731**	.161ns	.477**
YLD2(H)	1.164a	1.029a	.835**	.743**	.453**	.814a	YLD2(h)	-.36ns	-.06ns	.303ns	.448**	.794**	.338**
CFT1(I)	.951a	.709a	1.34a	1.123a	1.071a	1.040a	CFT1(i)	.096ns	.498**	-.79ns	-.26ns	-.15ns	-.08ns
CFT2(J)	.433**	.537**	.508**	.402ns	.570**	.482**	CFT2(j)	.812**	.712	.742**	.838**	.675**	.768**
CTD1(K)	.178a	.436a	.595a	.746a	.268a	-.04ns	CTD1(k)	.968**	.810**	.646**	.444ns	.928**	.998**
CTD2(L)	.206ns	.529**	.466ns	.424ns	.103**	1.517a	CTD2(l)	.958**	.720**	.783**	.820**	.989	-1.3ns
MSA(M)	.855a	.666a	.863a	.679a	.760a	.870a	MSA(m)	.269**	.557**	.255**	.539**	.423**	.243**
CMS(N)	.740**	.732**	.729**	.751**	.703**	.727**	CMS(n)	.453**	.464**	.469**	.435**	.506**	.471**

Note. S1=Taiwan wife sample S2=Taiwan husband sample S3=Chinese wife in Minnesota sample S4=Chinese husband in Minnesota sample S5=American wife in Minnesota sample S6=American husband in Minnesota sample.

a. Loadings sixed to 1.0 for non-scaled solution (i.e., reference indicator)

* P=.05 significant at .05 level.

** P=.01 signicant at .01 level.

n.s. non significant

Paths 2, 3, 4, 5 indicate the relations between Attribution Style and Influence Strategies, where the self-served and other-blamed attribution had moderate positive relations with avoiding and contentious influence strategies. In contrast, the self-serving and other-blaming attribution styles had moderate negative relations with yielding and confronting influence strategies. However, there were some exceptions, where paths 2 (ATS-AVD) for American wife and husband samples, and paths 5 (ATS-CTD) for Taiwan wife and American wife samples were positive but nonsignificant. In general, hypothesis 4 is supported.

It's also important to note that attribution style has a significant negative path to relationship quality (path6). Attributions affect their satisfaction with and commitment too, marital relationships directly without the mediating processes of social influence; the more self-serving and other blaming attributional styles of couples in marital conflicts, the less satisfaction and commitment they reported in their marriage. Exceptions are noted in that this path was not significant in both Taiwan wife and Taiwan husband samples.

Paths 7-10, indicating relations between influence strategies and relationship quality, were not as strong as expected in most samples. Path 8 was positive and significant in both Chinese wife and Chinese husband in Minnesota samples, and path 9 was positive and significant in the American husband sample. For those Chinese couples in Minnesota, using a yielding strategy to solve marital conflicts led more reported satisfaction and commitment in their marriages. For the American husband sample, using a confrontation strategy to solve marital conflicts also led to more reported satisfaction and commitment in their marriages.

Overall, the models suggest that relationship norms play a very important role in influencing people's attribution style, which in turn influences the strategies that people choose to solve marital conflicts. Attribution style also plays a key role in affecting people's marital satisfaction and commitment, while the role of influence strategy in marital relationship quality, in this model, is only partially supported.

Additional discussion of the implications of the models is provided in the following chapter.

Assessment of Model Fit

In order to assess the plausibility of the models, three types of Fit Indices are used in this research.

1. "Absolute" Tests: Is the residual (unexplained) variance appreciable? e.g., Chi Square.

2. "Relative" Tests: How well does the model do compared to (a range of) other possible models with the same data? e.g., LISREL'S Goodness of Fit Index (GFI); Bentler & Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI).

3. "Adjusted relative" Tests: How does the model combine fit and parsimony (since any model could fit if enough parameters were estimated.)? e.g., James, Mulaik, & Brett's Parsimonious Fit Index (PGFI), and the index of Tucker and Lewis (TLI).

Table 10 shows the model fit indices for null models, revised theoretical models, and just-identified structural models for each sample. Just-identified structural models have no degrees of freedom in the relationships among the theoretical variables, i.e., all the degrees of freedom come from the measurement model which models relations among observed measures. In general, the GFIs of revised models are around .86, which is relatively strong. The adjusted relative test, PGFI and TLI indices are modest.

Table 10 Model fit indices

1. Taiwan wife sample (n=101)

Model Null model (Mo)	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	243.60	91	2.68	.739	.472	
Just-identified structural	125.90	67	1.88	.855	.546	.476
model (Mj)	67.69	56	1.21	.913	.487	

2. Taiwan husband sample (n=99)

Model Null model (Mo)	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	311.79	91	3.426	.676	.431	
Just-identified structural	128.15	67	1.913	.856	.546	.624
model (Mj)	76.80	56	1.371	.908	.484	

3. Chinese wife in Mn sample (n=103)

Model Null model (Mo)	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	300.51	91	3.302	.700	.447	
Just-identified structural	130.68	67	1.950	.855	.546	.614
model (Mj)	75.41	56	1.347	.912	.486	

4. Chinese husband in Mn sample (n=97)

Model Null model (Mo)	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	309.48	91	3.401	.671	.428	
Just-identified structural	106.73	67	1.593	.870	.555	.753
model (Mj)	67.41	56	1.204	.911	.486	

5. American wife sample (n=102)

Model Null model (Mo)	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	367.22	91	4.035	.650	.415	
Just-identified structural	118.24	67	1.765	.868	.554	.748
model (Mj)	99.07	56	1.769	.884	.472	

6. American husband sample (n=98)

Model Null model (Mo) LI	x^2	df	x^2/df	GFI	PGFI	TLI
Theoretical model (Mt)	316.53	91	3.48	.682	.435	
Just-identified structural	131.17	67	1.96	.843	.538	.613
model (Mj)	81.73	56	1.459	.896	.464	

Note
GFI=LISREL Goodness of fit index
PGFI=James, Mulaik, & Brett's Parsimonious fit index
TLI=Tucker Lewis Index

Table 11 shows the model comparisons of the six revised models with null models and just-identified models. As can be seen, compared with null models, the model fit indices for revised theoretical models were much better than the null models'. Therefore, the revised models were more plausible than null models, although in comparison with just-indentified structural models, the model fit in the revised theoretical models were far from ideal. Also, the absolute tests, Chi Squares, were not as strong as it was hoped they would be.

Table 11 Model comparison
1. Taiwan wife sample (n=101)

Comparison	x^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	117.70	24 (p<.01)	.483	.476
Mt-Mj	58.21	11 (p<.01)	.241	.399

2. Taiwan husband sample (n=99)

Comparison	x^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	183.64	24 (p<.01)	.589	.624
Mt-Mj	51.35	11 (p<.01)	.165	.223

3. Chinese wife in Mn sample (n=103)

Comparison	X^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	169.83	24 (p<.01)	.565	.587
Mt-Mj	55.27	11 (p<.01)	.184	.262

4. Chinese husband in Mn sample(n=97)

Comparison	X^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	102.78	24 (p<.01)	.332	.753
Mt-Mj	39.32	11 (p<.01)	.127	.162

5. American wife sample (n=102)

Comparison	X^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	248.98	24 (p<.01)	.678	.748
Mt-Mj	19.17	11 (p<.01)	.052	-.001

6. American husband sample (n=98)

Comparison	X^2	dfs	NFI	NNFI
Mo-Mt	185.36	24 (p<.01)	.586	.613
Mt-Mj	49.44	11 (p<.01)	.156	.202

Note
NFI=Bentler & Bonett Normed fit index
NNFI=Bentler & Bonett Non-Normed fit index
Mo=Null model
Mt=Theoretical model
Mj=Just-Identified model

Discussion

Generally, the findings provide substantial support for the revised model, althouth the impacts of gender roles and cultural values on relationship norms were not supported in the initial model. First, there is strong and consensual evidence across all samples, that relationship norms affect couples' attribution styles, which in turn affect the choice of conflict-resolution strategies, and marital satisfaction and commitment. The hypotheses are supported, in that individuals with higher exchange relationship norms, a very pervasive norm in modern life, attribute their marital conflicts in a more self-served and other-blamed way. Second, self-serving and other-blaming attribution styles decreased couples' marital relationship quality, and lead to greated reported use of negative influence strategies, such as contending and avoiding, and less positive influence strategies, such as yielding and confrontation. In general, the theoretical model fit moderately well for each of the Taiwanese wife sample, Taiwanese husband sample, Chinese wife in Minnesota sample, Chinese husband in Minnesota sample,

American wife sample, and American husband sample. These findings provided a cross-cultural understanding of conflict resolution processes in close relationships.

1. These findings contradict the basic assumptions of social exchange theory. Social exchange theory has been the most widely adopted perspective in social relations research. According to this approach, the endurance and satisfaction of relationships are determined by the same principles that operate in the economic marketplace: rewards, costs, alternatives. In effect, social exchange models of relationships stipulate that we "buy" the best relationship we can get--the most rewarding, the least costly, and the best value relative to other possibilities (Brehm, 1985). In short, traditional social exchange notions portray us as selfish, egoistic individuals searching to "make a deal" that will benefit us personally. This viewpoint stands in complete contrast to the idea that truly loving relationships are based on unselfish, altruistic concern for each other. In bridging the gap between these two views, "equity" is a relationship norm, which maintains the exchange fairness, and precludes destructive exploitation (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973). Recently, an increasing numbers of researchers are becoming aware of the contextual effects of relationship norms and the trade-offs of the economic-maketing view of relationships, especially close relationships (Deutsch, 1986; Mills & Clark, 1982; Murstein, 1983; Rubin, 1973). As Deutsch (1985) pointed out, four kinds of relationships are defined by four dominant principles, namely, "need satisfaction" in family relationships, "equality" in friendship, "equity" in impersonal, economic relations, and "winner-takes all" in competitive relationships.

Similarly, Murstein, Cerreto, & MacDonald (1977) postulated that an exchange orientation may be inimical to close-kint intimate relationships, because it is impossible for individuals to monitor their spouses 24 hours a day. Moreover, people having an exchange relationship norm tend to be 'score keepers'. They are more concerned about inequity of contribution, the perception of which may be caused by their own egoistive bias; this impossible score-keeping, and over-sensitivity to inequity, is detrimental to close relationships.

Overall, the findings support the notion that people believe they should have a nonexchange relationship in their close relationships, and the the non-exchange view of relationships helps them think positively of their partners and relationships. However, the measures of the study are all self report, which can not tell us how people actually behave.

2. In addition, the significant correlations between theoretical variables and family life related variables such as duration of marriage, number of children, and family life cycle are also noted. It seems that when people have more children and children's ages are younger,

family stress would get higher. Under these high stress circumstances, people tend to establish exchange relationship norms, use less constructive strategies, and in turn are lessatisfied in and less committed to their marital relationships. Without rational thinking and constructive learning, people "react" to stress in a non-constructive way.

3. Age is also negatively correlated with the constructive aspect of conflict resolution processes, while level of education has more positive correlations. It seems that people cope with their conflicting marital relationships in a passive way when time goes by.

4. Along similar lines, the relationships of influence strategies and relationship quality are not as strong as expected in the Structural Equation Models; only confrontation and yielding have significant relations with relationship quality, and only in some samples. The possible explanation for this is twofold.

First, couples in close relationships that are intense and frequent, are accustomed to "react" instead of "act" to improve their relationships. As Lerner (1989) observed from her clinical experiences," ..., differences perse are rarely 'the problem' in relationships; the problem is instead our reactivity to differences..... Reactivity exaggerates and clarifies differences.... Toning down our reactivity is perhaps the most crucial and difficult step toward removing barriers to intimacy or toward solving any human problem.... Change occurs only as we begin thinking about and working on the self-rather than staying focused on and reactive to the other. (pp85-86)." So, couples tend to use reactive strategies, which aren't effective in relationships. Unless reactivity is toned down and more productive strategies are learned, marital conflicts are more difficult to solve.

Second, as Bradury and Fincham (1990) suggested, the subjective feelings of relationship satisfaction have both long-term and short-term aspects. According to Bradbury and Fincham (1990), a distinction must be drawn between transient, state-like short-term satisfaction and stable, trait-like, ling-term satisfaction. Short-term satisfaction may be in part a consequence of ling-term satisfaction and, in reciprocal fashion, transient feelings of satisfaction may accumulate over time to affect ling'term satisfaction. However, little attention has been devoted to short-term satisfaction. It is suggested here that influence strategies may be related more to short-term statisfaction than to ling-term satisfaction, while the measures of relationship quality in this research are of a ling-term perspective.

5. In sum, this investigation examined an array of variables as it attempted to illuminate the overall proess of conflict resolution in close relationships. To a substantial degree,

the goals set for this investigation were met. The fit of the revised models of the overall fit indices of the models are less than .90, which can be improved substantially in the future, according to Bontler and Bonett's (1980) experiences.

Limitations

A mumber of limitations stem from difficulty in locating reliable instruments. In order to have more than one indicator for each construct, all possible instruments were used. The reliability of some of them was less than ideal.. However, to address these limitations, a great deal more needs to be done to improve the measurement tools.

The influence strategies measures may not be valid and reliable for negative influence strategies, like avoiding and contending (see Table 2) Future research should explore more about various kinds of influence strategies that are pervasive in cultural and relationship contexts by using more observation and descriptive research designs.

The cultrral values measures used in this study also need revision. A much more con-text-specific measure needs to be developed, to allow valid reflection of the cultural values in close relationships. For example, issues of commitment, loyalty, in-law relationships, and child raising need to be put in the marriage context instead of a general, universal measure in a universal context.

Of course, the[1] samples are skewed towowards a highly educated group of people due to convenient sampling method rather than random sampling method, and it is not clear whether similar processes occur for less educated, or low-classed groups of people.. Therefore, the results have a restricted range, in terms of generability. Obviously, future re-search needs to consider more diverse populations.

Implications

First, this process view does provide theorists and practitioners with a broader and more comprehensive perspective. For many years, practioneers have emphasized the im-

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1. Thanks for the reviewer's suggestion that in order to provide more reliable model testing where sample sige should be larger, the researcher may do multi-sample testings across six subsample. and then combine them into a general model fitting analysis in the future.

provement of communication skills, while neglecting people's definitions of their relationships, and the effects of attribution styles on the motivation to communicated, a motivation which in turn may affect the constructiveness of communications. The results of this research should help to remind practitioners to be more aware of the complex context in which couples' relationships are cmbedded, an awareness which can influence the effectiveness of interventions. In a preventive sense, changing couples' norms and the attribution styles may be more effective than only learning influence strategies; awareness of relationship norms and attribution processes can deep couples from being trapped in unconstructive "communication". Repeated failure to constructively influence partners, and failure to cause positive changes in the relationship, may erode trust and the courage to try again. The cognitive reconstruction approach is optimal for making norms and attribution processes explicit. This is especially important in collectivist cultures, for example, Chinese culture, where norm and attribution play more substantial roles than influence strategies.

Besides practical applications, in theoretical terms, these research results can provide a more comprehensive and integrating framework than has previous research. Also, the relative importance of norms, attributions, and strategies to conflict resolution proccesses in close relationships are well-documented, and open to further research.

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親密關係的衝突化解歷程

劉惠琴 *

（中文摘要）

本研究提出了一個了解親密關係中衝突化解過程的理論模式。模式中包括個別差異 (individual differences)，關係規範 (relationship norms)，影響策略 (influence strategies)，及關係品質 (relationship quality) 等因素。研究採用問卷調查法。問卷由研究者設計，包括性別角色，文化價值與態度、交換關係導向與行為，歸因型態，影響策略，及關係品質等變項。樣本包括 100 對在台灣的中國人夫婦，100 對在美國明尼蘇答州的中國人夫婦，及 100 對在美國明尼蘇答州的美國人夫婦。資料分析採用結構方程式模式設計 (Structural equation modeling design) 來分析，此方法結合驗證性因素分析 (confirmatory factor analysis) 與因徑分析 (path analysis) 兩法之優點，對理論模式的合適程度進行評估。初步分析結果，刪掉較不具影響力的個別差異因素，而確立了修改後的理論模式。

綜合來看，研究結果相當支持修改後的理論模式，合適指數 (Goodness of Fit) 在 85～87 之間。在模式中，關係規範因素強而有力地影響夫婦們在面對衝突時的歸因型態，進而影響到策略的選擇，及婚姻關係的品質。比如，採取關係交換導向 (exchange oriented) 的夫婦，就較多呈現利已責他 (Self-serving / spouse blaming) 的歸因型態。第二、利己責他的歸因型態易導致較多負面策略的使用，較少正面策略的使用，同時並降低婚姻滿足感與承諾感。第三，影響策略因素對關係品質的影響不如預期地強，只有部份假設得到支持。最後，性別差異的討論亦在結論部份提出。

關鍵詞：親密關係、衝突化解

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Conflict Resolution Processes in Close Relationships

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(Abstract)

A theoretical model is proposed to illuminate the processes of conflict resolution in close relationships. The model includes individual differences, relationship norms, attributions, and influence strategies. A set of questionnaires including measures of gender role, allocentrism-idiocentrism values and attitudes, exchange-orientation, exchange-communal behavior, marital attribution style, social influence strategies, and relationship quality, was developed. Samples are 100 Chinese couples in Taiwan, 100 Chinese and 100 American couples in Minnesota, USA. The data were analyzed by a structural equation modeling design, which essentially integrates confirmatory factor analysis with path analysis. The degree to which obtained data fit a conceptual model can be evaluated. As a result, the initial models were revised by dropping some nonsignificant factors, and revised models were generated by respecification. Generally the findings provide substantial support for the revised models. First, across all the samples there is strong and consistent evidence that relationship norms affect couples' attribution style, which in turn affects the choice of conflict resolution strategies and marital satisfaction and commitment. Couples who establish more exchange oriented (rather than communal oriented) relationship norms, attribute their marital conflicts in a more personally self-serving and spouse-blaming way. Second, self-serving and spouse-blaming attribution styles decrease marital relationship quality and lead to more use of negative influence strategies like contending and avoiding, and less use of positive influence strategies like yielding and confrontation. Third, the social influence strategy factor does not play a successful mediating role between attribution and relationship quality, although some findings still partially support the hypotheses. In addition, cultural and gender differences are discussed.

Key Words: close relationships ˋ conflict resolution.

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