

Novelty vs predictability: Relationship tensions in close relationships

by

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Abstract

The goal of this research is to examine relationship challenges and outcomes to experiences of both internal and between-person relationship tensions in novelty and predictability. Consistent with the dialectical model, I predicted that internal and between-partner tensions would be associated: a) more with the challenge of boredom than conflict, b) more with trying novel activities than familiar ones, and c) with reduced relationship quality. These hypotheses were assessed in two studies. In Study 1, a correlational design was employed where participants in long-term close relationships completed questionnaires related to personal relationship tensions, challenges, activity engagement, and relationship quality. In Study 2, I extended my analysis by using an experimental design to examine the effects of perceived tensions between partners in participants own relationships on challenges, activities, and relationship quality. Additionally, in Study 2, I examined the effect of goal orientation (approach, avoidance) in shaping these associations.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	9
Relationship Tensions	9
Baxter’s Novelty-Predictability Tension.....	11
Relational Boredom	17
Meaning and Measurement of Relational Boredom.....	17
Correlates and Outcomes of Relational Boredom.....	20
Individual Differences in Relationship Tensions	22
Rationale	23
Hypotheses	25
Proposed Studies	29
Study 1: Correlates of Relationship Tensions	29
Method.....	30
Results.....	34
Main analyses.....	40
Discussion.....	59
Study 2: Actual Relationship Scenario Manipulation	61
Method.....	62
Results.....	67
Discussion.....	73
General Discussion	74
References	90
Footnotes	96

Tables

Study 1: Correlates of Relationship Tensions

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics.....	38
Table 1.2: Correlation Matrix.....	39
Table 1.3: Comparing gender within internal and between-partner tensions.....	40
Table 2.1: Relationship between internal and between-partner tensions and relationship challenges.....	43
Table 3.1: Relationship between internal and between-partner tensions and novel and familiar activities.....	46
Table 3.2: Relationship between internal and between-partner tensions and activity engagement as a function of gender.....	46
Table 4.1: Relationship between internal and between-partner tensions and relationship quality.....	48
Table 4.2: Relationship between internal and between-partner tensions and relationship quality as a function of gender.....	49
Table 5: Internal and between-partner tensions predicting relational boredom...	52
Table 6: Internal tensions predicting activity engagement.....	54
Table 7: Between-partner tensions predicting activity engagement.....	56
Table 8: Internal and between-partner tensions predicting conflict and relationship quality.....	59

Study 2: Actual Relationship Scenario Manipulation

Table 9: Descriptive statistics of dependent variables.....	68
Table 10: Descriptive statistics of relationship challenges.....	69

Table 11: Descriptive statistics and mean differences for activity engagement...71

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for relationship quality.....73

Figures

Figure 1: Appetitive-Aversive Framework.....84

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Notice	99
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	100
Appendix C: Survey Materials	102
Demographics.....	102
Study 1: Correlates of Relationship Tensions.....	104
Study 2: Actual Relationship Scenario Manipulation.....	110
Appendix D: Debriefing Form	116

Novelty vs predictability: Relationship tensions in close relationships

When they first met, Alex and Natasha were content with each other in their close relationship. They made each other laugh, they shared exciting moments, and after just six months they moved in together and showed no signs of slowing down. Four years later, they are still strong in their relationship. They express their commitment and love to each other often, and enjoy each other's company. Behind the scenes, though, Natasha and Alex have begun to express some opposing needs in their relationship. Natasha, an outgoing, excitement-driven person, enjoys going out and trying new things regularly. Alex, however, has become a little more reserved over the years, and prefers to maintain a sense of predictability in his everyday life. Although Alex remains content with the amount of predictability in the relationship, Natasha feels that there is not enough novelty and is expressing a need for more excitement and novelty between her and Alex in the relationship.

The challenge that Natasha and Alex face does not fit typical strains in close relationships including conflict, betrayals, lies, and infidelity (e.g., Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Kowalski, 2000). Rather, the strain Natasha and Alex are experiencing centres on too much and/or too little of two equally good needs: novelty and predictability. Instead of responding by reducing something negative (e.g., conflict), Natasha and Alex might need to respond by including both relatively equal levels of predictability and novelty in their relationship.

Relationship tensions

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) posited that close relationships are characterized by a series of contradictions—or tensions—where couples strive to achieve a balance

between opposing needs (e.g., novelty and predictability). A healthy relationship is one where partners manage to balance each other's needs (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Thus, neither opposing need is necessarily better than the other; the ideal state is a *balanced* one. However, it is a common occurrence in relationships for one side of the tension (e.g., novelty or predictability) to be more prominent than the other, and disrupt the balance (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Montgomery, 2000).

Relationship tensions occur at several levels: within the person, between the partners, and within the close relationship as a whole (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). In this research, I will examine both internal (within the person) and between-partner relationship tensions (when one partner wants more novelty but perceives that their partner does not). For example, Natasha is experiencing an internal tension because she wants more novelty than is currently present in her relationship. Or, Natasha is experiencing a between-partner tension because she wants more novelty in the relationship than Alex.

According to Baxter and Montgomery (1996), there are three main tensions that people face in relationships: openness-closedness, independence-dependence and novelty-predictability. A person in a close relationship experiences the openness-closedness tension when he or she perceives that there is not enough disclosure or that there is not enough privacy in the relationship (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Although disclosure is a necessary component of intimacy and trust (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) and can reduce the stress

associated with attempting to maintain privacy (Pennebaker, 1989; Stokes, 1987), it can also undermine an individual's sense of control over their private self (Petronio, 1994).

The independence-dependence tension occurs when a person perceives that there is too much co-dependence in a relationship or that there is too much autonomy in the relationship (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Dependence and independence are associated with personal growth and satisfaction, when they are in balance (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Burgoon, 1982).

The final tension is between novelty and predictability. The novelty-predictability tension is described by Baxter and colleagues as the contradiction between a person wanting novelty and excitement in the relationship, as opposed to wanting familiarity and security in the relationship (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This tension is expressed through the simultaneous need to participate in novel, uncertain experiences and exciting activities with one's romantic partner versus the need to participate in the routine and certainty associated with familiar and secure experiences with one's romantic partner.

Research has examined the effects of privacy needs and disclosure needs in close relationships (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Pennebaker, 1989; Petronio, 1994; Simmel, 1950; Stokes, 1987) as well as the effects of autonomy needs and dependency needs in close relationships (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Burgoon, 1982; Kelley et al. 1983). However, less research exists concerning novelty needs and predictability needs in close relationships. The focus of my study will be on the novelty-predictability tension in relationships.

Novelty-Predictability Tension

Novelty and predictability are important and beneficial experiences that people need in their close relationships (Baxter, 2011; Baxter, 1993; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). However, when partners begin expressing opposing needs in their close relationship in which one partner wants more predictability while the other partner wants more novelty, this shapes relational outcomes such as relationship quality, conflict, and the manner the partner responds.

Relationship quality. One outcome of a tension is reduced relationship quality (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 1990). When equilibrium is reached for partners experiencing the novelty-predictability tension, partners experience an increase in relationship quality. However, when partners experience opposing needs in their relationship, like Natasha and Alex, they are acknowledging (to themselves or to each other) that something is missing in the close relationship. Consequently, reduced relationship quality occurs until the needs expressed by both relationship partners are met (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 1990).

Conflict. Increased challenges like conflict may arise when expressing opposing novelty and predictability needs (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Erbert, 2000). Baxter and Erbert (1999) state that conflict can occur when one partner wants *less* novelty and the other partner wants *more* novelty. That is, conflict occurs between partners when they are each fighting for *opposing* features of the novelty-predictability tension. Erbert (2000) labels this type of conflict as *antagonistic*. Importantly, it is this type of conflict that can cause a relationship to end, as the couple must find a way to resolve their opposing needs (i.e., the fact that one partner wants more novelty but the other partner does not) in order to continue together (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). When a conflict is *non-antagonistic*,

this means they recognize that a need must be met in order to maintain relationship quality; however, both partners' needs are the same (i.e., *both* want more novelty). Erbert (2000) examined antagonistic conflict in a qualitative study in which participants in close relationships were interviewed regarding conflict episodes in their relationship, and then they were asked to report on how salient each of the internal contradictions were for each conflict episode. Results revealed that in 34% of the 625 reported conflict episodes, the novelty-predictability tension was considered to be central. Furthermore, of these novelty-predictability conflict episodes, approximately 22% were considered to be antagonistic conflict episodes (in comparison to 14% non-antagonistic) in which one partner wanted more predictability while the other partner wanted more novelty in the close relationship (Erbert, 2000). Thus, conflict—especially antagonistic—is an important challenge that can arise when experiencing an imbalance in novelty and predictability, and can have a strong influence on how people in close relationships respond it.

Responses to tensions. Baxter and colleagues' have examined the responses that couples make in an attempt to cope with tensions, including the novelty-predictability tension (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Montgomery, 2000). This research has mainly used qualitative methods to explore the effects of the tensions on the relationships.

For instance, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) described six primary responses to contradictions that couples tended to report during their qualitative interviews: (1) *Denial*, involves the couple denying the existence of one side of the contradiction in total support of the other; (2) *Disorientation*, refers to a couple viewing the contradiction as

unavoidable, negative and uncontrollable; (3) *Spiraling Alternation*, includes a couple alternating between each side of the contradiction at different points in time; (4) *Segmentation*, involves a couple pairing certain topics with certain sides of the tension, allowing different sides to be revered over another depending on the topic at hand; (5) *Balance*, refers to a couple revering both sides of the contradiction equally in compromise; and (6) *Reaffirmation*, consists of a couple simply enduring the contradiction without attempting to resolve it in any way. In an additional study assessing responses to contradictions, Baxter and Montgomery (2000) reported a seventh response, *Recalibration*, where a couple transforms the meaning of the opposition they are experiencing. That is, rather than view the contradiction as a tension in their romantic relationship, these researchers argue that when responding this way couples tend to ignore the underlying issue of the existence of a contradiction in favour of viewing each side as separate from the other. Thus, they are perceived to be no longer in opposition.

However, these responses are not equal in their use (Baxter, 1990). That is, some responses appear to be more frequently chosen than others as a result of requiring more cooperation and compromise between parties in the romantic relationship, depending on the relationship tension they are experiencing. For example, for the independence-dependence tension, responding with *segmentation* requires that both parties accept which topics are to be placed with each side of the tension; whereas for the openness-closedness tension, responding with *segmentation* merely requires at least one party to delineate a topic as “off limits” without requiring the other party’s consent (p. 73).

As a result of the complexity that arises with having so many different responses, Baxter (1990) presented four basic overarching responses. *Selection* occurs when couples

select one side of the tension over the other. For example, Natasha might turn to predictability in her relationship and give up her needs for novelty. *Separation* occurs when couples strive to co-exist with both sides of the tension by separating them in time. If Natasha feels that eating dinner with Alex outside of the home is predictable, then Alex will not use going out to dinner as a method to increase novelty. *Neutralization* occurs when couples lessen the force of each side of the tension. For instance, perhaps rather than view all dinner dates as predictable, Natasha will see dinner at home as predictable, but will attempt to view dinner outside of the home as more novel. Lastly, *reframing* is a response in which a couple transforms the meaning of the tension so each side is no longer in opposition. Thus, Natasha would need to reframe her view of predictability so that it can enhance her experience of novelty in the relationship.

In an attempt to move from qualitative assessments of responses in relationship tensions to quantitative assessments, Baxter and Simon (1993) investigated the most common responses that partners make while experiencing one or more of the relationship tensions. More specifically, Baxter and Simon (1993) examined the link between maintenance strategies employed by couples during times of relationship strain and the three relationship tensions (independence-dependence, openness-closedness, novelty-predictability) by asking people in close relationships to complete a series of questionnaires assessing relationship tensions and relationship maintenance strategies. The aim of the study was to determine if specific maintenance strategies functioned to achieve equilibrium during times when couples experienced strain in one or more of the relationship tensions. Relationship tensions were assessed by asking participants questions regarding too much or too little novelty, predictability, openness, closedness,

independence, and dependence (e.g., “our relationship has too many surprises in it”). Participants were then asked about positive and negative maintenance behaviours in their relationship (e.g., “initiate a fight or argument with the other”, “initiate contact during the day”). The authors then used factor loading to determine that there were three overall maintenance strategies used by partners: contact, romance, and avoidance. Furthermore, the authors found that, depending on what tension couples were experiencing, some maintenance strategies were employed more than others. For example, in times when both partners were experiencing excessive predictability (versus another tension), people in close relationships tended to increase their romantic efforts by creating a romantic environment for their partner that included surprise and spontaneity, which the authors theorized was chosen to relieve feelings of boredom. Thus, the maintenance strategy selected when couples were experiencing strain in the novelty-predictability tension was an increase in novelty, which served to equalize the needs of both partners (Baxter & Simon, 1993). Importantly, no standard measures of relationship challenges were used in this study; rather, Baxter and Simon (1993) employed previous qualitative methods of the relationship tensions to create a measure to assess the existence of relationship tensions and their link with specific maintenance strategies.

In sum, Baxter and colleagues describe three specific relationship tensions that can occur between partners in a close relationship: novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, and independence-dependence (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Montgomery, 2000). Additionally, Baxter and colleagues have conducted several qualitative interviews that investigated responses to the experience of relationship tensions, as well as a link with reduced relationship

satisfaction and increased conflict (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Erbert, 2000). Additionally, in a correlational analysis, Baxter and Simon (1993) found that partners employ three types of maintenance strategies (contact, romance, avoidance) when experiencing relationship tensions, and that some maintenance strategies (e.g., romance) are employed over others when experiencing particular tensions (e.g., lack of novelty).

Importantly, a gap in the literature on relationship tensions exists, such that the relationship tensions have not been associated with some relationship challenges (e.g., conflict, relational boredom) using standard measures. More specifically, Baxter and associates linked the relationship tensions with reduced relationship satisfaction and increased conflict between partners using qualitative interview techniques, and correlationally linked relationship tensions with specific maintenance strategies. However, standard measures of relationship challenges like conflict and relationship quality were not assessed in the Baxter and Simon (1993) study. For instance, one relationship challenge in relationship literature that has been viewed more recently as an important relationship challenge that couples face has not been assessed by these researchers, namely, relational boredom.

Relational Boredom

Baxter and Simon (1993) found that boredom was a consequence to feelings of excessive predictability, but did not examine this in great detail. Furthermore, since that research was conducted there has been increased research on a) the meaning and measurement of relational boredom and b) the correlates and outcomes of relational boredom.

Meaning and measurement of relational boredom

Stage Models of Boredom. Caughlin and Houston (2006) presented the stage model, which views boredom as one of several stages in the deterioration process of a relationship. In this model boredom occurs in the empty shell marriage, in which boredom is characterized by a lack of both positive and negative emotions in the relationship. Thus, in an empty shell marriage, both affection and antagonism are low, resulting in a relationship that is left with little emotion overall. Furthermore, Knapp and Vangelisti (1996) argue that boredom occurs during the “stagnation stage” of a close relationship, in which partners experience a lack of communication. This results in deterioration and eventual dissolution of the close relationship. Importantly, a consequence of the experience of boredom is one in which one or both partners begin to feel a sense of routine and predictability. That is, as the partners interact with each other, they begin to feel that future interactions will be the same as those that occurred in the past, and will hold little surprise and excitement. This leads to reduced communication between partners, and causes them to begin to seek other sources of excitement that are outside of the close relationship.

Self-Expansion Model. Aron and Aron (1986, 1997), and Aron, Norman, and Aron (1998) state in their model of self-expansion that close relationships are a means for people to experience a continual source of personal growth. Feeling tired of the partner (or boredom) is the result of decelerated self-expansion. That is, the experience of acquiring new experiences and information from one’s partner and relationship slows down. When couples experience boredom, it is important for them to increase their sense of novelty and excitement in their close relationship.

Lay-Conceptions of Boredom. Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012, 2013) conducted a study to determine how laypeople characterize relational boredom in their close relationships by asking dating and married people, “What does relational boredom mean?”. Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012, 2013) asked participants to rate the prototypicality of specific relational boredom features. Results indicated that some features of relational boredom were more typical in the minds of individuals than others. For example, participants characterized relational boredom using such statements as “no more surprises”, “feels dull”, and “lack of interest in partner”. These characteristics were then used to create the first full scale of relational boredom. The main themes identified in this analysis were a deceleration of self-expansion, a lack of intimacy and communication between partners, as well as the theme of feeling worn down in the relationship.

Thus, research has defined characteristics of relational boredom (Aron & Aron, 1986; Caughlin & Houston, 2006; Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012; Knapp & Vangelisti, 1996) that are similar to those characteristics defined by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) for predictability in a close relationship. Specifically, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) stated that predictability is characterized by a state of routine, a lack of surprise, and a lack of novelty in the close relationship. Similar to these characteristics, the relational boredom literature emphasizes a state of routine (Knapp & Vangelisti), a lack of intimacy, communication, and surprise (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012), and a lack of overall emotion (Caughlin & Houston, 2006). Furthermore, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) make reference to boredom as a potential consequence of too much certainty and

predictability in a close relationship; although it is not specifically labeled as *relational* boredom.

Correlates and Outcomes of Relational Boredom

Relationship Quality. A study conducted by Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012) found that feelings of relational boredom were associated with a lack of positivity in the relationship, less intimacy and communication between partners, detachment from one's partner, and the sense of feeling worn down in the relationship, which is associated with reduced relationship quality between partners (i.e., relationship satisfaction).

Additionally, Tsapelas, Aron, and Orbuch (2009) found that over a period of time predictability and routine significantly reduced closeness between partners, which then reduced overall satisfaction with the marriage in future years. More specifically, Tsapelas, Aron, and Orbuch (2009) assessed married couples twice regarding their satisfaction and boredom levels in their relationship. Participants answered questions concerning feelings of boredom ("During the past month, how often did you feel that your marriage was in a rut, that you do the same thing all the time and rarely get to do exciting things together as a couple?"), satisfaction and closeness. Results indicated that increased levels of predictability and routine present in the marriage in year 7 predicted significantly less satisfaction with their relationship in year 16.

Activity Engagement. One way to do reduce feelings of relational boredom, according to Aron and Aron (1986), is through novel couple activity engagement. Thus, when one partner is experiencing a relationship tension in the form of a lack of novelty in the relationship, he or she might seek to increase the engagement of novel activities with his or her partner to attempt to increase their excitement level.

More specifically, Aron and Aron's (1986, 1997) model of self-expansion postulates that people experience expansion when they participate in novel and arousing activities in order to enhance their sense of self. The act of participating in novel and arousing activities serves as a way to gain new experiences and knowledge. Research supporting this model suggests that couples should increase their engagement in novel activities in order to experience an increase in relationship excitement and relationship quality (Aron et al., 2000). Specifically, a study conducted by Aron et al. (2000) asked participants to participate in either an exciting activity or a mundane activity, and then to complete a questionnaire concerning their relationship quality and excitement level. Results indicated that participants reported greater relationship satisfaction and excitement when they participated in the exciting activity. Additionally, there was no increase in relationship satisfaction for those who participated in the mundane activity, as well as reports of a decrease in excitement level for participants in the mundane activity. Consequently, novel activity engagement may be a relational outcome that occurs as a result of experiencing a relationship tension in the form of a lack of novelty.

Harasymchuk and Fehr (in prep) found that when people in long term relationships were asked to think about instances of relational boredom (vs conflict), they rated that they would be more likely to respond to the boredom situation with more novel couple activities than familiar couple activities. In contrast, for conflict, people thought they were more likely to engage in familiar than novel activities. Harasymchuk, Cloutier, Lebreton, and Peetz (in prep) also found that people think they should engage in more novel couple activities when bored (vs a control group), were more likely to select a

novel over a familiar activity when presented in a forced-choice format, and planned a date that had more novel than familiar qualities.

In sum, relational boredom is a relationship challenge that couples experience in their close relationships, and can lead to a reduction in relationship quality and affect the types of shared leisure time couples engage in (or at least what they think they should do and what they plan to engage in). The self-expansion model stipulates that people intend to increase their novel activity engagement depending on the need for self-expansion at a given moment in time.

One area that remains to be studied is the role of individual differences in the experience of the novelty-predictability tension. For example, with Natasha and Alex, the fact that Natasha is an outgoing person whereas Alex is a reserved person is an individual difference that influences their relationship. As a consequence, the lack of novelty cited by Natasha may be a result of individual differences.

Individual Differences in Relationship Tensions: Motivation Orientation

One individual difference that might influence the experience of an imbalance between novelty and predictability is motivation orientation. As outlined by several researchers (e.g., Eder, Elliot, & Harmon-Jones, 2013; Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006; Elliot & Church, 1997; Gable, 2006), goal completion is influenced by one's motivation. More specifically, these researchers explain in a hierarchical model of motivation that motivation is prompted by specific dispositional preferences; that is, our motivation to engage in certain behaviour but not in other types of behaviour depends on what we want. There are two main kinds of motivation: approach-motivation, which directs behaviour toward positive stimuli; and avoidance motivation, which directs behaviour away from

negative stimuli (Eder, Elliot et al., 2013; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot et al., 2006; Gable, 2006). Thus, while both an approach-motivated person and an avoidance-motivated person will attempt to achieve similar goals for their close relationship (e.g., more novelty in the close relationship), they will do so by following different paths. An approach-motivated person would likely seek out novelty because he or she is biased toward approaching the experience of excitement in his or her relationship. An avoidance-motivated person would likely avoid the experience of predictability because he or she is biased toward avoiding the experience of boredom in his or her relationship.

The likelihood that the couple will seek out novel versus familiar activity engagement to meet a specific need in the relationship will also be influenced by the motivation orientation of the partners involved. In their hierarchical model of motivation, Elliot et al. (2006) specify that approach-motivation orients an individual toward positive relational outcomes; whereas avoidance motivation orients an individual away from negative relational outcomes. Thus, different motivational orientations will elicit different strategies in need achievement. For example, if Natasha is an approach-motivated individual and she felt there was not enough novelty in her relationship, she might turn to Alex directly and ask him about taking a trip to go rock climbing because she would be motivated to instill a greater sense of excitement into the relationship (i.e., a positive stimuli). On the contrary, if Natasha is an avoidance-oriented individual, she might ask Alex to engage in less familiar activities with her.

Rationale

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) emphasize that it is not predictability or novelty that is good for a close relationship; rather, it is both predictability *and* novelty that is

good for a close relationship. Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argue that high levels of both predictability and novelty can have negative impacts on a close relationship, and that people in close relationships should strive for a balance and integration of both elements (see also Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron et al., 2000; Baxter, 1990, 1993, 2011; Baxter & Simon, 1993; Knobloch, 2008; Reissman et al., 1993). In a study examining novelty and predictability in the context of close relationships, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) examined the characteristics of the novelty-predictability tension using a qualitative interview, in which relationship partners were asked about their experience of too much predictability or too much novelty in their close relationships in an open-ended format (e.g., feeling too much excitement or too much boredom when around their partner). However, greater emphasis was placed on examining the characteristics of the novelty-predictability tension with qualitative methods (Baxter, 1990; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter & Montgomer, 2000). I aim to replicate and extend Baxter's work, which assessed couple responses to the experience of relationship tensions (qualitatively linking relationship tensions to challenges like conflict and outcomes like relationship satisfaction, and quantitatively linking tensions to maintenance strategies), by assessing additional relationship challenges and outcomes. As well, I will focus on associating them with an imbalance between internal (within the person) and between-partner strains in novelty and predictability in relationships. More specifically, in terms of relationship outcomes, I will examine relationship challenges (e.g., relational boredom and conflict), relationship quality (e.g., relationship satisfaction and closeness), and activity engagement patterns (e.g., novel and familiar activities). Additionally, I will distinguish relationship tensions into internal (within the self) and between-partner tensions, a

distinction that has not been a major focus in Baxter's work. A focus will be placed on internal (within the person) and between-partner tensions that occur when one partner wants more novelty and the other partner wants more predictability in their relationship and the associated relational outcomes (relationship challenges, relationship quality, novel and familiar activity engagement), as well as the potential individual differences that might influence activity engagement.

Hypotheses

I have several hypotheses to assess the outcomes of internal and between-partner tensions for novelty and predictability in close relationships. The following hypotheses examine the relationship tensions, relationship challenges, relationship quality, and activity engagement patterns of dating and married people.

Hypothesis 1: Internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability will be associated with increased relationship challenges including conflict and particularly relational boredom.

In the context of the dialectical model, relationship challenges in close relationships, like conflict, have been qualitatively examined as potential consequences that can arise when one partner feels strain in the close relationship (Baxter & Erbert, 1999; Erbert, 2000). For instance, Erbert (2000) explicitly investigated the association between predictability and conflict and found that participants reported that approximately 22% of conflict episodes in their close relationships were related to relationship strain in regards to predictability and novelty (i.e., lower levels of novelty or excess novelty). Thus, I hypothesized that internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability would be associated with an increase in conflict.

In addition, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and Baxter and Simon (1993) made reference to boredom as a consequence of the novelty-predictability tension (more specifically, in the form of too much predictability) in a close relationship when they quantitatively assessed tensions between partners within romantic relationships. In their qualitative analysis of the novelty-predictability tension, participants reported feeling boredom in their relationship when there was an imbalance that involved too much predictability. These researchers defined predictability as a state of routine, a lack of surprises, and lower levels of novelty and excitement (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). This definition is similar to Aron et al.'s (2000) measurement items of relational boredom, in addition to the features of relational boredom identified in a prototypical analysis involving dating and married people (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012, 2013), including no longer exciting and no more surprises. Thus, I hypothesized that internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability, specifically in regards to feelings of a lack of novelty, would be associated with an increase in relational boredom.

Hypothesis 2: Internal and between-partner tensions that favour a lack of novelty will be associated with greater intentions to engage in new activities in the near future.

Aron and Aron (1986) stated in their self-expansion model that people seek to engage in novel activities to expand their sense of self. Thus, an excess of predictable activities would lead people to seek out more novel, self-expanding activities.

Importantly, these ideas have not been tested empirically. In a more recent investigation, Harasymchuk & Fehr (in prep) found that participants reported they would be more likely

to increase their engagement in novel activities with their romantic partner when they were asked to recall memories of relational boredom than conflict. Thus, I hypothesized that feeling there was not enough novelty in a close relationship would be associated with a greater desire to engage in more novel activities with one's romantic partner.

Hypothesis 3: Internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability will be associated with lower relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) stated that the experience of the novelty-predictability tension in a close relationship can lead to doubt and reduced closeness between partners, and even relationship dissolution. Furthermore, when partners express opposing needs in their close relationship (that is, one partner wants more novelty while the other partner does not) this breeds frustration and conflict between partners, and can reduce relationship quality because each partner has needs that are unmet in the close relationship. Thus, I hypothesized that when partners experience an internal or between-partner relationship tension for novelty and predictability in their close relationship, this would be associated with reduced relationship satisfaction and closeness between partners.

Hypothesis 4: Internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability will be more strongly associated with relational boredom and novel activity engagement than the other relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) found participants in close relationships reported increased boredom, a state of routine, a lack of surprises, and lower levels of novelty and

excitement when describing the effects of excess predictability in a qualitative interview. These characteristics are similar to the conceptualization of boredom provided by Aron et al. (2000) and Harasymchuk and Fehr (2012, 2013). Consequently, it was hypothesized that lower levels of novelty would share the strongest association with increased relational boredom, above and beyond the associations for the openness-closedness and independence-dependence tensions. In other words, specific tensions would be linked to specific challenges. In this case, tensions for novelty and predictability would be linked with greater relational boredom above and beyond other tensions experienced in the relationship. It was also hypothesized that internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability would share the strongest association with novel activity engagement, above and beyond the associations for the openness-closedness and independence-dependence tensions.

Individual Differences

Hypothesis 5: The positive association between internal and between-partner relationship tensions for novelty and predictability (i.e., not enough novelty) and the desire to engage in more versus less activities will be stronger for people who score higher on approach-motivation (vs. lower).

Elliot et al. (2006) stipulate that approach-motivation pushes individuals toward positive relationship outcomes, whereas avoidance-motivation pushes individuals away from negative relationship outcomes. Thus, when experiencing lowered levels of novelty in a relationship, partners who are approach-motivated would be more likely to engage in more novel activities in order to instill a greater sense of excitement in the relationship (a positive relational outcome). On the contrary, partners who are avoidance-motivated

would be more likely to engage in less familiar activities in order to avoid a greater sense of boredom in the relationship (a negative relational outcome). Thus, I hypothesize that the desire to engage in more novel activities would be stronger for people who score higher on approach-motivation when faced with a novelty-predictability tension.

Proposed Studies

The main purpose of this research was to analyze the consequences of an imbalance between perceptions of novelty and predictability in close relationships. In Study 1, correlates of internal tensions (e.g., feeling more predictability but wanting more novelty) and between-partner relationship tensions (e.g., one partner feels there are lower levels of novelty while the other partner does not) were assessed with a sample of dating and married people. In Study 2, the focus was on between-partner relationship tensions. I predicted that primed tensions between novelty and predictability *between partners* would lead to increased perceptions of relationship tensions, decreased perceptions of relationship quality, and greater intentions to restore a balance based on activity choices (versus the other relationship tensions).

Study 1: Correlates of Internal and Between-Partner Relationship Tensions

In Study 1, relationship tensions that people experience within the self (e.g., feeling that you want more novelty in your relationship than predictability) as well as between partners (e.g., feeling that you want more novelty in your relationship but your partner wants more predictability) were correlated with relationship challenges and outcomes. More specifically, I focused on whether an imbalance between novelty and predictability (experienced as an internal or between-partner tension) was linked with relationship challenges (i.e., relational boredom and conflict) and activity engagement

(i.e., novel and familiar couple activities), and explored whether an imbalance between novelty and predictability was linked with relationship quality (i.e., relationship satisfaction and closeness). Additionally, I examined how the other relationship tensions (i.e., openness-closedness; independence-dependence) were linked to those same outcome correlates. In particular, I examined whether the experience of an internal or between-partner tension for novelty and predictability would be more strongly associated with relational boredom, the desire to engage in more novel activities, and the desire to engage in less familiar activities, than would the openness-closedness and independence-dependence tensions. In addition, I explored which internal and between-partner tension (novelty-predictability; openness-closedness; independence-dependence) would be most strongly associated with increased conflict, and reduced relationship satisfaction and closeness.

Method

Participants. Participants ($N = 130$) were recruited using the Crowdfunder online survey system for a short online survey called “Relationship Tensions” and received \$0.25 US for their participation. Twelve participants were deleted due to incomplete survey data, because they indicated they were single, or were outliers in the data, resulting in a sample of 117 participants ($n = 50$ men; $n = 67$ women). The mean age of the sample was 39.50 years (18-74 years). Participants indicated they primarily had high school (31.6%) and university (33.3%) degrees, followed by college degrees (23.1%), PhD/Masters degrees (10.3%), and other (1.7%; e.g., vocational school). The participants indicated that they were married (45.3%), in a serious dating relationship (22.2%), in a serious dating relationship and living together (13.7%), in a common-law

relationship (1.7%), single and casually dating (12%), in a serious dating relationship while living together and engaged (4.3%), or other (0.9%; e.g., separated). Of the participants who indicated they were in a marital relationship, 44.4% indicated that this was their first marriage. Additionally, the average length of close relationships in this sample was approximately 9 years ($M = 9.22$). Of those participants that indicated they did have children (37.6%), the majority (84.6%) did not have children under two years old.

Measures and Procedure. Participants were asked to complete an informed consent form as well as a demographic questionnaire (e.g., age, gender, relationship status). Next, participants were asked to answer questions regarding their own personal relationship tensions (novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, independence-dependence), relationship challenges (relational boredom, conflict), activity engagement (novel and familiar activities), and relationship quality (relationship satisfaction, closeness). With the exception of the demographic questionnaire (always shown first), all other measures were presented in a random order.

Relationship tensions. Three questions (i.e., current internal tension, ideal internal tension, between-partner tension) were created based on Baxter and Simon's (1993) and Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) work, to represent each relationship tension (*Novelty-predictability*, lack of excitement or too much excitement; *Openness-Closedness*, lack of privacy or too much privacy; *Independence-Dependence*, lack of autonomy or too much autonomy; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Tensions were measured in two ways: a) internal tensions and b) between-partner tensions.

Internal tensions were assessed in two ways. First, I assessed people's current tension levels. In addition, I was also interested in people's different expectations for qualities like novelty in the relationship. In order to address this, I also assessed people's ideals for the tensions and created an internal tension discrepancy score. An internal tension score represented the discrepancy between what the participant currently experiences in their relationship (e.g., more novelty or more predictability) and what they ideally wish they experienced in their relationship. More specifically, two questions focused on internal tensions (within the person), and asked participants to indicate how they would characterize their relationship in terms of novelty and predictability (and openness-closedness, independence-dependence) in their relationship *right now* and then for what they *ideally* want using a slider scale. Participants were directed to slide a meter to the number they felt best characterized the novelty and predictability (or openness-closedness or independence-dependence) in their close relationship at that moment and then ideally (where $-50 = \text{more predictability/closedness/dependence}$, $0 = \text{balanced}$, $+50 = \text{more novelty/openness/independence}$). Thus, for both the current and ideal measures, a positive high score indicated that there was a tension in the direction of too much novelty, openness, or independence; a negative score indicated too much predictability, closedness, or dependence.

Additionally, one between-partner tension measure was created for each relationship tension in which partners expressed opposing needs in the relationship. Participants were asked to focus on tensions between partners (e.g., "My partner enjoys a lot of familiarity, routine, and security in our relationship, and pushes me to engage in a lot of predictable activities with him/her, but I would prefer if we had a little more

novelty and excitement on a day-to-day basis”; where 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Additionally, participants were asked about the other two tensions (i.e., I wanted closedness but my partner wanted openness; I wanted independence but my partner wanted dependence).¹

Relationship challenges. Relational boredom in a close relationship was measured using Harasymchuk and Fehr’s (2012) Relational Boredom Scale. This scale consists of 15 items that include statements like “*exciting*” (reverse-coded), “*dull*” and “*feels like a chore*”. Participants were asked to rate the representation of each item regarding their close relationship on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = *not true* and 7 = *completely true*. Participants were also asked, “How frequently do you feel bored in your relationship” (where 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *all the time*).

Conflict in a close relationship was measured using Braiker and Kelley’s (1979) conflict questionnaire, which consists of five items such as, “How often do you and X argue with each other?” and “How often do you feel angry or resentful toward X?”. Participants were asked to rate these questions on a nine-point Likert scale where 1 = *not at all* and 9 = *very much*.

Activity engagement. Activity engagement was measured with two face-valid questions (i.e., “Overall, how likely is it that you will do more new and unfamiliar things with your partner in the next 4 weeks”; and “Overall, how likely is it that you will do more old and familiar things with your partner in the next 4 weeks”). Each question was rated on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *very likely*.

Relationship quality. Relationship satisfaction in a close relationship was measured using Hendrick’s (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale. This scale consists of

seven items that include questions like, “How well does your partner meet your needs” and “How good is your relationship compared to most”. Participants were asked to rate these questions on a five-point Likert scale where *1 = not at all* to *5 = very*.

Closeness was measured using Aron et al.’s (1992) Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale. This scale includes seven Venn diagrams that each consist of two circles. Each Venn diagram represents the self and the other as two separate circles that overlap. In sequential order, the circles become progressively more overlapped. The more the circles overlap, the more the participant perceives the partner to be one with their self-concept (viewing themselves as “we” rather than two independent “me’s” in the relationship). Participants are asked to select one of the seven Venn diagrams that best represented how they see the self and other in their relationship.

Results

Initial Tests. Before proceeding with the main analyses, I assessed the missing data, outliers, and normality. Analysis of missing data indicated the missing data occurred at random (0.8%- 1.7%) and so participants were not excluded from the dataset. Tests for outliers and normality indicated the variables were relatively normal; however, one outlier participant was located and removed. Further tests of normality indicated no variables were significant in regards to kurtosis; however, several variables were significantly skewed. In addition, several participants violated at least two of the Mahalanobis distance, Cook’s distance, or Leverage tests and were subsequently filtered from the analyses. The dataset was considered large enough to withstand violations of normality and so further adjustments were not made.

Descriptive Statistics. All means, standard deviations and ranges are presented in Table 1. On average, participants reported they sometimes felt bored in their relationship and they sometimes experienced conflict with their partner. As well, participants felt they were very close to their relationship partners and that they were very satisfied with their relationship. Lastly, participants also reported that they were somewhat likely to engage in novel activities with their partner in the near future, and that they were likely to engage in familiar activities with their partner in the near future. A t-test showed that participants were more likely to intend to engage in familiar activities ($M = 5.53$) than novel activities ($M = 4.07$; $p < .001$).

Overall, participants indicated they *currently* felt more predictability was present in their relationship, but *ideally* would like to have more novelty ($t(115) = 4.15$, $p < .001$, see Table 1.1). Currently, participants felt more openness was present in their relationship and ideally would have even more openness ($t(113) = -4.01$, $p < .001$). Lastly, participants reported that they currently have more independence in their relationship and that this was similar to what they ideally wanted in their relationship ($t(115) = -.32$, $p = .75$). Three internal tension scores were computed to determine the discrepancy between the current relationship status variable and the ideal relationship status variable for each relationship tension. These scores were computed by subtracting the values for the current relationship variable from the values for the ideal relationship variable for each tension separately, and then converting to the absolute value of each score. This created one internal tension score for each relationship tension.

For experiences of tensions between partners, the majority of participants reported they somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more novelty but their partner

wanted more predictability. As well, the majority of participants reported they somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more predictability but their partner wanted more novelty. For the openness-closedness tension, the majority of participants somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more closedness but their partner wanted more openness; and they somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more openness but their partner wanted more closedness. For the independence-dependence tension, the majority of participants reported they somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more dependence but their partner wanted more independence; and they somewhat agreed with the statement that they wanted more independence but their partner wanted more dependence.

Gender differences. Although no formal hypothesis was made regarding gender, I examined gender to determine if there were any differences between men and women for relationship tensions. Thus, a one-way anova was conducted, with results showing that no significant differences existed between men and women on ideal novelty and predictability, $F(1, 114) = .59, p = .44$; current levels of openness and closedness, $F(1, 113) = .81, p = .37$; ideal levels of openness and closedness, $F(1, 113) = .27, p = .60$; current levels of independence and dependence, $F(1, 114) = .13, p = .72$; or ideal levels of independence and dependence, $F(1, 114) = .31, p = .58$. However, significant differences existed between men and women for how much novelty and predictability was currently present in their relationships, $F(1, 115) = 6.08, p = .02$, such that women reported relatively balanced levels of novelty and predictability in the relationship ($M = .82$), but men reported more predictability than novelty in the relationship ($M = -.949$).

Additionally, gender was examined to determine if men and women scored differently within each internal tension (see Table 1.3). A repeated-measures analysis revealed that no significant differences existed for men and women within each internal tension discrepancy measure (novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, independence-dependence), $F(1, 114) = .15, p = .88$. A repeated-measures analysis was conducted in order to compare gender within three specific between-partner relationship tensions: (1) the participant wanted more novelty but felt their partner wanted more predictability; (2) the participant wanted more closedness but felt their partner wanted more openness; and (3) the participant wanted more independence but felt their partner wanted more dependence. Results showed that men and women differed significantly in their reporting of between-partner relationship tensions when comparing a lack of novelty, a lack of closedness, and a lack of independence, $F(1, 115) = 5.54, p = .04$. More specifically, men ($M = 4.23$) reported significantly higher experiences of these three between-partner tensions overall than women ($M = 3.76$). Thus, gender differences for between-partner tensions were explored for relationship challenges, activity engagement, and relationship quality based on these significant differences. Refer to Table 1.3 for details on the other three between-partner relationship tensions (in which the participant experienced a lack of predictability, lack of openness, or lack of dependence).

Table 1.1
Descriptive statistics

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Possible Range
Internal Tension Measures			
<i>Current Predictability-Novelt</i>	-5.09	22.86	Predictability (-50) – 0 – Novelty (+50)
<i>Current Closedness-Openness</i>	14.96	23.89	Closedness (-50) – 0 – Openness (+50)
<i>Current Dependence-Independence</i>	4.93	21.19	Dependence (-50) – 0 – Independence (+50)
<i>Ideal Predictability-Novelt</i>	3.25	20.11	Predictability (-50) – 0 – Novelty (+50)
<i>Ideal Closedness-Openness</i>	23.13	19.17	Closedness (-50) – 0 – Openness (+50)
<i>Ideal Dependence-Independence</i>	5.51	19.95	Dependence (-50) – 0 – Independence (+50)
Internal Tensions (ideal-current)			
<i>Predictability-Novelt</i>	8.38	22.48	Balanced (0) – Greater discrepancy (+100)
<i>Closedness-Openness</i>	8.09	21.54	Balanced (0) – Greater discrepancy (+100)
<i>Dependence-Independence</i>	0.58	19.30	Balanced (0) – Greater discrepancy (+100)
Between-Partner Tensions			
<i>I want novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	3.91	1.52	1-7
<i>I want closedness, partner wants openness</i>	3.80	1.78	1-7
<i>I want independence, partner wants dependence</i>	4.14	1.63	1-7
Relationship Outcomes			
<i>Relational Boredom</i>	2.83	1.04	1-7
<i>Conflict</i>	3.27	1.47	1-9
<i>Novel Activity Intentions</i>	4.07	1.70	1-7
<i>Familiar Activity Intentions</i>	5.53	1.49	1-7
<i>Closeness</i>	5.03	1.55	1-7
<i>Relationship Satisfaction</i>	3.92	1.49	1-5

*Note: slider scores (current/ideal) represent degree of novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, and independence-dependence, on a dimension where negative scores mean more predictability or closedness or dependence is present in the relationship and positive scores mean more novelty or openness or independence is present in the relationship

*Discrepancy scores represent degree participants fall short of their ideals in regards to novelty, openness, and independence in their relationship. Thus, higher scores mean there is a greater difference in what they ideally want in their relationship vs. what they currently experience in their relationship

*The possible range for the discrepancy scores can exceed +50 because subtracting the highest possible score (50) from the lowest possible score (-50) of the slider measure is 100. Thus, the highest/lowest possible discrepancy score is the absolute value of 100.²

Table 1.2

Correlation Matrix depicting associations between selected demographic variables, internal tensions, and between-partner tensions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Relationship Length (1)	-	-.26*	-.16	.03	.07	-.26*	-.25*	.01	.03	.01	-.19*	.06	-.09
Internal Tensions													
<i>Current predictability and novelty</i> (2)		-		.16	-.02	.21*	.24*	-.25**	-.21*	-.17	.11	.07	-.03
<i>Ideal predictability and novelty</i> (3)			-.46**	-.05	.26*		.16	.38**	.26*	.16	.08	-.11	.08
<i>Current closedness and openness</i> (4)				-	.51**	-.02	.17	-.36**	-.56**	-.24	-.09	.11	.05
<i>Ideal closedness and openness</i> (5)					-	.02	-.01	.18	.19*	.01	-.10	-.03	-.01
<i>Current dependence and independence</i> (6)						-	.56**	.23*	.23*	.09	.21	.002	.23*
<i>Ideal dependence and independence</i> (7)							-	.04	-.13	-.18*	.22	.17	.37**
<i>Predictability/novelty Internal Tension</i> (8)								-	.61**		.06	-.17	.10
<i>Closedness/openness Internal Tension</i> (9)									-	.32**	.15	-.17	.06
<i>Dependence/independence Internal Tension</i> (10)										-.46**	-.12	.01	.01
Between-Partner Tensions													
<i>I want Novelty, partner wants predictability</i> (11)											-	.12	.16
<i>I want Closedness, partner wants openness</i> (12)												-	.41**
<i>I want Independence, partner wants dependence</i> (13)													-

*Note: * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .001$

*Internal tension indicates discrepancy between how much novelty, closedness, or independence is currently in the relationship vs how much is wanted in the relationship

Table 1.3
Comparing gender within internal tensions and within between-partner tensions

	Means		<i>p</i>
	Men	Women	
Internal Tensions			
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	.82	-9.49	.02
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	17.29	13.23	.37
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	4.1	5.56	.72
<i>Ideal levels of predictability and novelty</i>	4.9	2.00	.44
<i>Ideal levels of closedness and openness</i>	24.20	22.31	.60
<i>Ideal levels of dependence and independence</i>	6.7	5.51	.59
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	14.36	14.91	.88
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	11.31	13.51	.55
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	10.20	11.50	.66
Between Partner Tensions			
<i>I want Novelty; My Partner wants Predictability</i>	4.04	3.81	.41
<i>I want Closedness; My Partner wants Openness</i>	4.16	3.54	.06
<i>I want Independence; My partner wants Dependence</i>	4.42	3.93	.10
<i>Grand-Mean</i>	4.21	3.78	.04

*Note: *p*-value indicates significant mean difference between men and women³

Main Analyses. Do one or more of the relationship tensions, both within the person and between partners (particularly the novelty-predictability tension), predict specific relationship challenges (i.e., relational boredom and conflict) and relationship outcomes (i.e., relationship quality and activity engagement)?

Hypothesis 1a: Internal tensions between novelty and predictability will be associated with increased relationship challenges, particularly relational boredom.

Hypothesis 1a focused on the relationship between internal tensions in novelty and predictability and relationship challenges (relational boredom and conflict). Bivariate correlations were examined in order to determine whether there was a significant positive association between an internal perception (that is, the internal perception of current experiences in novelty and predictability reported by participants),

an internal discrepancy (falling short of ideal levels of novelty and predictability in the relationship), and relationship challenges, particularly with relational boredom.

Participants' reports of current experiences regarding novelty and predictability in the relationship indicated that more predictability was experienced in the relationship than novelty ($M = -5.09$) on a scale where negative scores meant more predictability and positive scores meant more novelty, and this was significantly associated with relational boredom ($r = -.45, p = .000$) but not with conflict ($r = -.01, p = .91$). In other words, the more perceived novelty, the lower the relational boredom scores but not conflict. The internal tension score described the discrepancy between current levels of novelty and predictability and ideal levels of novelty and predictability for participants. Specifically, there was a discrepancy in how much novelty was currently present in the relationship versus how much novelty participants wanted in the relationship, in which higher numbers represented a greater lack of novelty for participants. Bivariate correlations were run with the internal discrepancy score, and this was significantly correlated with relational boredom ($r = .39, p < .001$) and conflict ($r = .29, p = .002$). A Fisher's z test indicated these correlations were not significantly different ($z = .86, p = .39$).

Hypothesis 1b: Between-partner tensions in novelty and predictability will be associated with increased relationship challenges, particularly relational boredom.

Hypothesis 1b focused on the relationship between perceived tensions between partners in novelty and predictability and relationship challenges using bivariate correlations (relational boredom and conflict, see Table 2.1). In the between-partner tension involving novelty and predictability, participants imagined a time when they wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability. This type of tension (in

which higher scores meant a greater tension between partners) was not associated with increased relational boredom ($r = .04, p = .65$), but was associated with increased conflict ($r = .18, p = .05$).

Gender was examined due to significant differences found for between-partner tensions between men and women. Thus, when the sample was split by gender, results showed that the between-partner tension where men wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability was not associated with relational boredom ($r = -.03, p = .85$), but was associated with conflict ($r = .33, p = .02$). For women, the between-partner tension was not associated with relational boredom ($r = .16, p = .20$), or conflict ($r = .08, p = .53$).

Thus, hypothesis 1a was supported; participants' reports of current levels of novelty and predictability (in which, currently, more predictability was present in the relationship than novelty, $M = -5.09$) was significantly and negatively correlated with relational boredom but not conflict (that is, greater novelty in the relationship was associated with reductions in relational boredom). Furthermore, the internal discrepancy tension (where greater scores meant lower levels of novelty in the relationship) was significantly correlated with increased relational boredom and conflict, with no significant differences between the two. Hypothesis 1b was partially supported in that the between-partner tension was associated with increased conflict; although, there were no significant differences between relational boredom and conflict. The between-partner tension in which men wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability was associated with conflict but not relational boredom, and when women wanted more

novelty but their partner wanted more predictability, this was associated with neither conflict nor relational boredom.

Table 2.1

Relationship between internal/between-partner tensions and relationship challenges

	Relational Boredom	Conflict
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Internal Tensions		
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	-.45***	-.01
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	-.44***	-.16
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	.18*	.12
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	.39***	.29**
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	.31***	.14
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	.13	.11
Between-Partner Tensions		
<i>I want novelty but my partner wants predictability</i>	.04	.18*
<i>I want closedness but my partner wants openness</i>	.09*	.04
<i>My partner wants dependence but I want independence</i>	.19*	.19*

Note: *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ** indicates significance at $p < .01$ * indicates significance at $p < .05$ ⁴

*Note: higher scores in current levels of relationship tensions indicate more novelty is present in the relationship; internal tensions indicates discrepancy between current amounts of novelty, closedness, and independence and how much is wanted in the relationship – that is, higher scores mean lower levels of novelty is present

Hypothesis 2a: Internal tensions between novelty and predictability will be associated with greater intentions to engage in new activities (and greater intentions to engage in less familiar activities) in the near future.

Hypothesis 2a focused on the internal perception score for the novelty-predictability tension (indicating that currently, more predictability is present in the relationship than novelty on a scale where negative scores meant more predictability and positive scores meant more novelty, $M = -5.09$) and the internal discrepancy score (where higher scores meant less novelty was present in the relationship) and their association with increases in novel activity engagement and decreases in familiar activity engagement using bivariate correlations. Participants' reports of current experiences

regarding novelty and predictability in the relationship was significantly associated with likelihood of novel activity engagement ($r = .45, p = .000$) but not with likelihood of familiar activity engagement ($r = -.07, p = .480$), although in the right direction. These correlations suggest that as more novelty is present in the relationship, this was associated with more novel activity engagement and less familiar activity engagement. Additionally, the internal tension score for novelty-predictability (with higher scores representing a greater lack of novelty) was not significantly correlated with novel activity engagement ($r = -.09, p = .33$) but was with familiar activity engagement ($r = -.27, p = .003$, see Table 3.1). Importantly, these correlations suggest that an experience of a lack of novelty was not associated with increased novel activity engagement but was associated with a decrease in familiar activity engagement.

Hypothesis 2b: Tensions between partners in novelty and predictability will be associated with greater intentions to engage in more novel activities and greater intentions to engage in less familiar activities in the near future.

Hypothesis 2b focused on between-partner tensions for the novelty-predictability tension and its association with novel and familiar activity engagement. Bivariate correlations were conducted in order to determine whether specific between-partner tensions predicted increases in novel activities and decreases in familiar activities (see Table 3.1).

The between-partner tension in which the participant wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability was associated with increased novel activity engagement ($r = .39, p < .001$), but not with reduced familiar activity engagement, although again in the right direction ($r = -.09, p = .32$). I examined gender to further

investigate the gender differences previously found for between-partner tensions. Thus, when the sample was split by gender, when men wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability, this was associated with increased novel activity engagement ($r = .34, p = .01$), but not with reduced familiar activity engagement ($r = .05, p = .73$).

When women wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability, this was associated with increased novel activity engagement ($r = .39, p = .001$), but not with reduced familiar activity engagement, although in the right direction ($r = -.18, p = .16$).

Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. More specifically, when the participant expressed novelty needs, this was associated with greater intentions to engage in novel activities in the near future. Importantly, for the internal discrepancy tension, a lack of novelty was significantly associated with a greater intention to engage in reduced familiar activities in the near future.

Table 3.1

Relationship between internal/between-partner tensions and novel vs. familiar activity engagement

	Novel Activities	Familiar Activities
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Internal Tensions		
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	.44***	-.11
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	.19*	.38***
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	.14	-.16
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	-.09	-.27**
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	-.22**	-.28**
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	-.10	-.18
Between Partner Tensions		
<i>I want novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	.39**	-.09
<i>I want openness, partner wants closedness</i>	.12	-.13*
<i>I want independence, partner wants dependence</i>	.03	-.07

*Note: *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; * indicates significance at $p < .05$ ⁵

*Note: higher scores in current levels of relationship tensions indicate more novelty is present in the relationship; internal tensions indicates discrepancy between current amounts of novelty, closedness, and independence and how much is wanted in the relationship – that is, higher scores mean lower levels of novelty is present

Table 3.2

Relationship between internal/between-partner tensions and activity engagement as a function of gender

	Novel Activities		Familiar Activities	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Between-partner tensions				
<i>I want novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	.34**	.39***	.05	-.18
<i>I want closedness, partner wants openness</i>	.01	.21	.12	.21
<i>I want independence, partner wants dependence</i>	.10	-.06	.09	-.16

Note: *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ** indicates significance at $p < .01$ * indicates significance at $p < .05$ ⁶

Hypothesis 3a: Internal tensions between novelty and predictability will be associated with lower relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness).

Hypothesis 3a focused on the internal perception as well as the internal discrepancy for novelty-predictability and its association with lower relationship quality

(satisfaction and closeness). That is, using bivariate correlations I investigated whether current levels of experiences in novelty and predictability and whether an internal discrepancy (where less novelty is present in the relationship than ideally wanted) would be associated with reduced relationship satisfaction and closeness. Participants' current levels of novelty and predictability indicated a stronger presence of predictability than novelty on a scale where negative scores meant more predictability and positive scores meant more novelty ($M = -5.09$), and was significantly associated relationship satisfaction ($r = .31, p = .001$) and closeness ($r = .26, p = .01$). Thus, when more novelty enters the relationship, this is associated with greater relationship satisfaction and closeness. The internal tension for novelty-predictability (in which people experienced less novelty than they ideally wanted in their relationship) was significantly correlated with decreased relationship satisfaction ($r = -.42, p < .001$) and closeness ($r = -.33, p < .001$, see Table 4.1). Thus, the less novelty is in the relationship, the less relationship satisfaction and closeness.

Hypothesis 3b: Tensions between partners in novelty and predictability will be associated with lower relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness).

Hypothesis 3b focused on between-partner tensions for novelty-predictability and its association with reduced relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness, see Table 4.1). The between-partner tension in which the participant wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more familiarity was not associated with closeness ($r = .10, p = .27$), or with relationship satisfaction ($r = -.09, p = .37$). To further investigate gender differences for between-partner relationship tensions, the sample was split by gender. The between-partner tension in which men wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more

predictability was not associated with closeness ($r = .25, p = .08$), or with relationship satisfaction ($r = .12, p = .42$). Similarly, when women wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability, this was not associated with closeness ($r = .001, p = .99$), or with relationship satisfaction ($r = -.22, p = .07$).

Thus, hypothesis 3 was partially supported. More specifically, when participants' current level of novelty and predictability increased, thus representing an increase in novelty, this was associated with increased satisfaction and closeness. Furthermore, the internal discrepancy tension in which a lack of novelty existed in the relationship was associated with a decrease in relationship satisfaction and closeness. Interestingly, neither between-partner tension situations were related to reductions in relationship satisfaction or closeness. This relationship existed for both men and women.

Table 4.1

Relationship between internal/between-partner tensions and relationship quality

	Relationship Satisfaction	Closeness
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Internal Tensions		
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	.29**	.23**
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	.50***	.31***
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	-.24*	-.31***
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	-.42***	-.33***
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	-.32***	-.17
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	-.27**	-.10
Between Partner Tensions		
<i>I want novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	-.06	-.02
<i>I want closedness, partner wants openness</i>	.40**	-.03
<i>I want independence, partner wants dependence</i>	-.07	-.28*

*Note: ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; * indicates significance at $p < .05$ ⁷

*Note: higher scores in current levels of relationship tensions indicate more novelty is present in the relationship; internal tensions indicates discrepancy between current amounts of novelty, closedness, and independence and how much is wanted in the relationship – that is, higher scores mean lower levels of novelty is present

Table 4.2

Relationship between internal/between-partner tensions and relationship quality as a function of gender

	Relationship Satisfaction		Closeness	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>
Tensions between Partners				
<i>I want novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	.12	-.22	-.22	.001
<i>I want closedness, partner wants openness</i>	-.11	.04	.03	.10
<i>I want independence, partner wants dependence</i>	-.46***	-.16	-.11	-.17

Note: *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ** indicates significance at $p < .01$ * indicates significance at $p < .05$ ⁸

Hypothesis 4a: Internal tensions in novelty and predictability will be more strongly associated with relational boredom than the other relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence).

Hypothesis 4a focused on determining whether an internal tension in novelty and predictability was more strongly associated with relational boredom than the other two internal tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence). A hierarchical linear regression analyses was conducted where the independent variables for model 1 were participants' reported current levels of novelty and predictability (in which higher scores meant more novelty was present in the relationship), of openness and closedness (in which higher scores meant more openness was present in the relationship), and of independence-dependence (in which higher scores meant more independence was present in the relationship); the independent variables for model 2 were the internal discrepancy tensions for novelty-predictability (in which higher scores meant lower levels of novelty was present), openness-closedness (in which higher scores meant lower levels of openness was present), and independence-dependence (in which higher scores meant lower levels of independence was present). Relational boredom was entered as the dependent variable for both models (see Table 5).

Model 1 was significant, $F(3, 111) = 21.51, p < .001, R^2 = .37$, indicating that 37% of the variance associated with relational boredom was explained by the internal perception of relationship tensions in which participants reported current relationship experiences of the tensions. More specifically, increases in novelty significantly predicted decreases in relational boredom ($b = -.02, t(111) = -5.39, p < .001, sr = -.41$). As well, increases in openness significantly predicted decreases in relational boredom ($b = -.02, t(111) = -4.78, p < .001, sr = -.36$). Interestingly, increases in independence predicted significant increases in relational boredom ($b = .01, t(111) = 2.53, p = .01, sr = .19$). Thus, the strongest predictor of relational boredom was the participants' reported current levels of novelty and predictability, which provided support for hypothesis 4a.

Model 2 was significant, $F(3, 110) = 6.93, p < .001, R^2 = .16$, indicating that 16% of the variance associated with relational boredom was explained by the internal relationship tensions. More specifically, decreases in novelty significantly predicted increases in relational boredom ($b = .02, t(101) = 2.91, p = .004, sr = .26$). Neither decreases in openness ($b = .01, t(110) = 1.07, p = .29, sr = .09$) nor independence ($b = -.002, t(110) = -.33, p = .75, sr = -.03$) significantly predicted increases in relational boredom. Thus, the only predictor of relational boredom was the participants' reported internal discrepancy of novelty and predictability, which provided support for hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b: Tensions between partners in novelty and predictability will be more strongly associated with relational boredom than will the other relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence).

Hypothesis 4b focused on determining whether perceived tensions between partners in novelty and predictability were more strongly associated with relational boredom than the other two relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence). This was investigated using a hierarchical linear regression analyses. Three of the between-partner tensions (participant wanted novelty but partner wanted predictability; participant wanted closedness but partner wanted openness; participant wanted independence but partner wanted dependence) were compared in their association with relational boredom (see Table 5). The dependent variable was relational boredom and the independent variables were the three between-partner tensions. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 113) = 1.96, p = .12, R^2 = .05$, suggesting that the between-partner tensions did not predict relational boredom.

To summarize, hypothesis 4a was supported, such that the strongest predictor of relational boredom was the participants' current experiences of novelty and predictability, as well as their internal discrepancy score for novelty and predictability. Hypothesis 4b was not supported, however, as the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability (where the participant wanted more novelty but felt their partner wanted more predictability) was *not* the strongest predictor of relational boredom.

Table 5
Internal and between-partner tensions predicting relational boredom

	Relational Boredom
	b
Internal Tensions	
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	-.02***
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	-.02
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	.01
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	.02**
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	.01
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	-.002
Between-Partner Tensions	
<i>I want Novelty, partner wants predictability</i>	.03
<i>I want closedness, partner wants Openness</i>	-.003
<i>I want Independence, partner wants Dependence</i>	.14*

Note: * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ⁹

*Note: higher scores in current levels of relationship tensions indicate more novelty is present in the relationship; internal tensions indicates discrepancy between current amounts of novelty, closedness, and independence and how much is wanted in the relationship – that is, higher scores mean lower levels of novelty is present

Hypothesis 4c: Internal tensions in novelty and predictability will be more strongly associated with increased novel activities and reduced familiar activities than will the other relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence).

Hypothesis 4c focused on determining whether an internal tension in novelty and predictability was more strongly associated with increased novel activities and reduced familiar activities than the other two relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence). Thus, two hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted where the independent variables for model 1 were the current level for novelty and predictability (where higher scores meant more novelty was present), the current level for openness and closedness (where higher scores meant more openness was present), and the current level for independence and dependence (where higher scores meant more independence was present); the independent variables for model 2 were the internal discrepancy scores for novelty-predictability (where higher scores meant lower

novelty was present), openness-closedness (where higher scores meant lower openness was present), and independence-dependence (where higher scores meant lower independence was present). The dependent variable in each model was novel activities (see Table 6). These analyses were repeated for familiar activity engagement as the dependent variable.

Novel Activities. Model 1 was significant, $F(3, 111) = 9.99, p < .001, R^2 = .21$, indicating that 21% of the variance associated with novel activities was explained by participants' current experiences of the three relationship tensions. More specifically, increases in novelty significantly predicted increases in novel activities ($b = .03, t(111) = 4.64, p < .001$). The internal perceptions for openness-closedness and independence-dependence were not significant predictors of novel activity engagement. Thus, as the current level of experiences for novelty-predictability was the only significant predictor of novel activities, there was support for hypothesis 4c. Model 2 was not significant, $F(3, 110) = 2.02, p = .12, R^2 = .05$. Thus, the internal discrepancy tensions were not significant predictors of novel activity engagement.

Familiar Activities. Model 1 was significant, $F(3, 111) = 8.92, p < .001, R^2 = .19$, indicating that 19% of the variance associated with familiar activities was explained by the participants' reported current level of novelty and predictability. More specifically, increases in openness significantly predicted increases in familiar activities ($b = .03, t(111) = 4.68, p < .000$). However, neither current levels of the novelty-predictability nor the independence-dependence tensions were significant predictors of familiar activities. Thus, as the current level of novelty and predictability was not a significant predictor of familiar activities, there was no support for hypothesis 4c.

Model 2 was significant, $F(3, 110) = 4.00, p = .01, R^2 = .10$, indicating that 10% of the variance associated with familiar activities was explained by the internal discrepancy relationship tensions. Interestingly, further inspection revealed that the internal tensions for novelty-predictability ($b = -.01, t(110) = -1.41, p = .16$), openness-closedness ($b = -.01, t(110) = -1.41, p = .18$), and independence-dependence ($b = -.004, t(110) = -.41, p = .68$) were not significant predictors of familiar activities, providing no support for hypothesis 4c.

Table 6

Internal tensions predicting novel and familiar activities

	Novel Activities	Familiar Activities
	b	b
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	.03***	-.01
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	.01	.03***
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	.01	-.01
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	.01	-.01
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	-.02	-.01
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	.001	-.004

Note: * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; *** indicates significance at $p < .001$

Hypothesis 4d: Tensions between partners in novelty and predictability will be more strongly associated with increased novel activities and less familiar activities than will the other relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence).

Hypothesis 4d focused on determining whether perceived tensions between partners in novelty and predictability were more strongly associated with increased novel activities and decreased familiar activities than the other two relationship tensions (openness-closedness and independence-dependence). This was investigated using a hierarchical linear regression analysis. Three of the between-partner tensions (participant

wanted novelty but partner wanted predictability; participant wanted closedness but partner wanted openness; participant wanted independence but partner wanted dependence) were compared in their relationship with novel activities (see Tables 7).

Novel Activities. A hierarchical linear regression analysis was conducted into which the dependent variable was novel activities and the independent variables were the three between-partner tensions. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 113) = 7.49, p < .001, R^2 = .17$, indicating that 17% of the variance associated with novel activities was explained by the between-partner tensions. More specifically, increases in the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability (I want novelty but partner wants predictability) significantly predicted increases in novel activities ($b = .42, t(113) = 4.32, p < .001$). Neither the between-partner tension for independence-dependence (I want independence but partner wants dependence), nor the between-partner tension for openness-closedness (I want closedness but partner wants openness) were significant predictors of novel activities. Importantly, the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability was the only significant predictor of novel activities, which supported hypothesis 4d.

Familiar Activities. A hierarchical linear regression was conducted into which the dependent variable was familiar activities and the independent variables were the three between-partner tensions; however, the overall model was not significant, $F(3, 113) = .86, p = .46, R^2 = .02$.

To summarize, hypothesis 4c was partially supported, such that the current levels for each relationship tension for novelty-predictability was the strongest predictor of increased novel activities but not decreased familiar activities. Furthermore, the internal discrepancy score for each relationship tensions were not significant predictors of novel

or familiar activity engagement. As well, hypothesis 4d was partially supported as the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability (where the participant wanted more novelty but felt their partner wanted more predictability) was the strongest predictor of increased novel activities; but not decreased familiar activities.

Table 7

Between-partner tensions predicting novel and familiar activities

	Novel Activities	Familiar Activities
	b	b
Between-Partner Tensions		
<i>I want Novelty, Partner wants Predictability</i>	.42***	-.09
<i>I want Closedness, Partner wants Openness</i>	.15	.10
<i>I want Independence, Partner wants Dependence</i>	-.09	-.09

Note: * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; *** indicates significance at $p < .001$ ¹⁰

Research Question 1: Which internal tension (novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, and independence-dependence) and between-partner tension will most strongly predict increased conflict and reduced relationship quality (relationship satisfaction, closeness)?

Several hierarchical linear regression analyses were conducted to determine which internal perception (current level of relationship tensions), which internal tension (discrepancy of relationship tensions), and which between-partner tension (participant wanted novelty but partner wanted predictability; participant wanted closedness but partner wanted openness; participant wanted independence but partner wanted dependence) best predicted conflict, relationship satisfaction, and closeness (see Table 8). In model 1, conflict was the dependent variable and the independent variables were the current level of experience of each relationship tension (novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, and independence-dependence). The overall model was not significant, $F(3,$

111) = 2.17, $p = .10$, $R^2 = .06$. In model 2, the dependent variable was conflict and the independent variables were the internal discrepancy scores for each relationship tension. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 110) = 3.48$, $p = .01$, $R^2 = .08$. Increases in a lack of novelty predicted increases in conflict ($b = .03$, $t(110) = 2.80$, $p = .01$). In model 3, the dependent variable was conflict and the independent variables were the between-partner tensions. The model was significant, $F(3, 113) = 2.77$, $p = .05$, $R^2 = .07$. Increases in the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability (participant wanted novelty but partner wanted predictability) was the only (marginal) predictor of increased conflict ($b = .17$, $t(113) = 1.91$, $p = .06$).

In model 4, relationship satisfaction was the dependent variable and the independent variables were the current level of experience for each tension. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 109) = 21.68$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .37$. Increases in the internal perception for openness-closedness (where higher scores meant more openness, $b = .01$, $t(109) = 5.89$, $p < .001$, $sr = .49$), and novelty-predictability (where higher scores meant more novelty, $b = .01$, $t(109) = 3.40$, $p = .001$, $sr = .31$) were significant predictors of increased relationship satisfaction; whereas the internal perception for independence-dependence (where higher scores meant more independence) predicted decreases in relationship satisfaction ($b = -.01$, $t(109) = -3.72$, $p < .001$, $sr = -.34$). The strongest predictor was openness-closedness. In model 5, the dependent variable was relationship satisfaction and the independent variables were the internal discrepancy scores of each relationship tension. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 108) = 9.42$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .21$. Increases in a lack of novelty significantly predicted decreases in relationship satisfaction ($b = -.01$, $t(108) = -3.45$, $p < .001$, $sr = -.30$), and was the only significant

predictor. In model 6, the dependent variable was relationship satisfaction and the independent variables were the between-partner tensions. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 111) = 3.73, p = .01, R^2 = .09$. The between-partner tension for independence-dependence (participant wanted independence but partner wanted dependence) was the only significant predictor of decreased relationship satisfaction ($b = -14, t(111) = -3.20, p = .002$).

In model 7, the dependent variable was closeness and the independent variables were the current levels of each tension. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 111) = 12.38, p < .001, R^2 = .25$. The internal perception for novelty-predictability (higher scores meant more novelty, $b = .02, t(11) = 3.11, p = .002, sr = .28$), and openness-closedness (higher scores meant more openness, $b = .02, t(111) = 3.16, p = .002, sr = .29$) predicted increases in closeness; whereas the current level of independence-dependence predicted decreases in closeness (higher scores meant more independence, $b = -.03, t(111) = -4.02, p < .001, sr = -.37$). In model 8, the dependent variable was closeness and the independent variables were the internal discrepancy scores for each relationship tension. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 110) = 4.64, p = .004, R^2 = .11$. The internal discrepancy score for novelty and predictability was the only significant predictor of decreased closeness, $b = -.03, t(110) = -3.23, p = .002, sr = -.29$. Lastly, in model 9, the dependent variable was closeness and the independent variables were the between-partner tensions. The overall model was not significant, $F(3, 113) = 1.12, p = .35, R^2 = .03$.

Table 8
Internal tensions and between-partner tensions predicting conflict and relationship quality

	Conflict	Closeness	Relationship Satisfaction
Internal Tensions	b	b	b
<i>Current levels of predictability and novelty</i>	.00	.02**	.01***
<i>Current levels of closedness and openness</i>	-.01	.02**	.01***
<i>Current levels of dependence and independence</i>	.01	-.03***	-.01***
<i>Predictability-novelty discrepancy</i>	.03**	-.03**	-.01***
<i>Closedness-openness discrepancy</i>	-.01	.01	-.001
<i>Dependence-independence discrepancy</i>	.01	-.001	-.01
Between-Partner Tensions			
<i>I want Novelty, Partner wants Predictability</i>	.17	.11	-.02
<i>I want Closedness, Partner wants Openness</i>	-.05	.10	.04
<i>I want Independence, Partner wants Dependence</i>	.17	-.12	-.12*

Note: * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .01$; *** indicates significance at $p < .001$

*higher scores in current levels of relationship tensions indicate more novelty is present in the relationship; internal tensions indicates discrepancy between current amounts of novelty, closedness, and independence and how much is wanted in the relationship – that is, higher scores mean lower levels of novelty is present

Discussion

The aim of study 1 was to correlate internal (within the self) and between-partner relationship tensions with relationship challenges (relational boredom, conflict), couple activity engagement (novel and familiar activities), and relationship quality (relationship satisfaction, closeness). The internal perceptions were defined as the participants' reported current experiences of each relationship tension (novelty-predictability, openness-closedness, independence-dependence). Participants reported that, generally, more predictability was present in their relationship than novelty (where negative scores meant more predictability was present and positive scores meant more novelty was present; $M = -5.09$); more openness was present in their relationship than closedness (where negative scores meant more closedness was present and positive scores meant more openness was present; $M = 14.96$); and more independence was present in their relationship than dependence (where negative scores meant more dependence was present

and positive scores meant more independence was present; $M = 4.93$). Gender differences existed for the novelty-predictability tension, such that men reported greater levels of predictability in their relationship, but women perceived their relationships to be more balanced. Additionally, men reported greater experiences of internal tensions overall than did women.

For the current experiences of the tensions, increases in current experiences of novelty and predictability (where higher scores meant more novelty) was significantly associated with decreased relational boredom but not conflict, increased novel activities but not decreased familiar activities, and increased relationship satisfaction and closeness. When the current level of experience for each relationship tension was entered into a hierarchical linear regression, the novelty-predictability tension was the strongest predictor of decreased relational boredom, and the only significant predictor of increased novel activity engagement. Furthermore, the strongest predictor of increased relationship satisfaction was the openness-closedness tension, and the novelty-predictability and openness-closedness tensions both similarly predicted increased closeness. Interestingly, the independence-dependence tension predicted decreased satisfaction and closeness.

For the internal discrepancy score (where higher scores meant lower levels of novelty were currently experienced in the relationship than was ideally wanted) was significantly associated with increased relational boredom and conflict, decreased familiar activity engagement, and decreased relationship satisfaction and closeness. When entered into a hierarchical regression analysis, the novelty-predictability internal discrepancy was the only predictor of increased relational boredom and conflict, and decreased relationship satisfaction and closeness.

The between-partner tension (in which the participant wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability) was significantly associated with increases in conflict and novel activity engagement. When all of the between-partner tensions were entered as predictors into a hierarchical linear regression (participant wanted more novelty but their partner wanted more predictability; participant wanted closedness but their partner wanted openness; participant wanted more independence but their partner wanted more dependence), the between-partner tension for novelty-predictability was the only significant predictor of (marginally) increased conflict, and increased novel activity engagement. Independence-dependence was the only significant predictor of decreased relationship satisfaction.

Thus, this study was able to establish that the novelty-predictability relationship tension (both within the person and between partners) was significantly associated with relational boredom, conflict, novel and familiar activity engagement, and relationship satisfaction and closeness.

In Study 2, the relation between the tensions and relationship challenges and outcomes were further examined using a relationship tension manipulation prime¹¹. In particular, between-partner relationship tensions were investigated.

Study 2: Primed Between-Partner Relationship Tensions and their Effects on Relationship Challenges and Outcomes

Study 1 examined correlates of tensions (within the self) and between-partner tensions (expression of opposing needs in the relationship), relationship challenges, activity engagement, and relationship quality (presented in random order). In this study, I primed dating and married people with between-partner tensions occurring in their own

close relationships in order to examine the association between reduced novelty and specific relationship challenges and outcomes. An additional goal of this study was to assess approach motivation as a moderator variable between the novel-predictability tension and the engagement of novel activities.

Method

Participants. Participants ($N = 620$) were recruited using the Crowdfunder online survey system for a short online survey called “Relationship Tensions”. The participants received \$0.25 US for their participation. One-hundred and sixty-one participants were deleted from the sample because they completed the survey in under one minute, left more than 50% of the survey incomplete, or indicated that they were single and not dating. Sixteen outliers were also deleted from the dataset. This resulted in a sample of 459 ($n = 207$ men, $n = 250$ women, $n = 2$ other). The mean age of the sample was 37.14 years old (18-75 years). Participants indicated they primarily had high school (28.1%) and university (35.9%) degrees, followed by college degrees (22.0%), PhD/Masters degrees (11.1%), and other (2.8%; e.g., technical school). Participants indicated they were married (48.1%), in a serious dating relationship (26.1%), in a serious dating relationship and living together (8.9%), in a common-law relationship (3.3%), single and casually dating (8.9%), or in a serious dating relationship while living together and engaged (4.6%). The average relationship length was approximately 11 years ($M = 10.92$). Of the participants who indicated they were in a marital relationship, 49.5% indicated that this was their first marriage. Of those participants that indicated they did have children (42%), under half (30.7%) did not have children under two years old.

Procedure. Participants first completed a demographic questionnaire (e.g., age, sex, relationship status) and an individual difference measure (i.e., approach-avoidance). Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of three relationship tension conditions where they were asked to imagine a type of tension between partners in the relationship (lack of novelty, lack of closedness, and lack of independence)¹². Next, participants completed the dependent measures including relationship challenges, relationship quality, and activity engagement.

Manipulation of Relationship Tensions. Measures of three internal relationship tensions were created for this study based on Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) model of relationship tensions. There were six conditions: lack of novelty, lack of predictability, lack of openness, lack of closedness, lack of independence, and lack of dependence. For this project, the focus was on three of the relationship tensions: lack of novelty (excitement), lack of closedness (privacy), and lack of independence (autonomy). Additional analyses were run with the lack of predictability, lack of openness, and lack of dependence as the focus, but were not reported in the main document (see footnotes). The decision to focus on only novelty, closedness and independence centered on the fact that the main focus of this project was the lack of novelty tension, and thus similar tension experiences were required for accurate comparisons.

Using a between-groups design, participants were randomly assigned to one of three relationship tension conditions. For each relationship tension condition, participants were asked to reflect on a particular tension with a partner in the relationship with five separate statements. After each statement they were asked to reflect on, participants answered several questions to ensure they adequately thought about the occurrence of

each statement in their close relationship. Importantly, each participant was asked (1) “How did you feel towards your relationship in this moment”; and, (2) “How much of an effect (whether positive or negative) did this moment have on your relationship”. A total lack of novelty variable was computed by summing and averaging the five affect variables and five effect variables that followed each lack of novelty statement. A reliability analysis indicated that the Cronbach’s alpha for these items was $\alpha = .75$. The five statements for each condition are listed below¹³.

Lack of novelty. Participants were asked to imagine a time when the following situations occurred in their relationship: (1) “You wanted more novelty and excitement in your relationship but didn’t think your partner felt the same way”; (2) “Felt as though things were routine, repetitive, predictable, like you were always doing the ‘same thing’ and your partner didn’t seem interested in changing things”; (3) “You suggested something (e.g., an activity) that was new and exciting but your partner seemed uninterested and wanted to do what you normally do when spending time together (e.g., television)”; (4) “Felt a lack of spark in the bedroom (i.e., sex not exciting) and your partner expressed disappointment when you suggested trying something different in the bedroom”; and (5) “You felt exasperated when your partner didn’t want to go out with you on date night, and instead he/she wanted to stay home”.

Lack of closedness. Participants were asked to imagine a time when the following situations occurred in their relationship: (1) “Your partner asked you about something in your past and you didn’t want to tell him/her”; (2) “Your partner asked you something personal, and you didn’t want to tell him/her because you weren’t ready to share that information with someone else”; (3) “Your partner kept pressing you about an issue you

didn't feel comfortable talking about"; (4) "You felt like there were not enough boundaries in your relationship because your partner wanted to know all your secrets"; and (5) "Had a date with your partner where your partner was being open about an issue; you felt you weren't ready to be as open with him/her".

Lack of independence. Participants were asked to imagine a time when the following situations occurred in their relationship: (1) "Felt like you and your partner were too dependent on each other and that there was very little independence left in your relationship (e.g., differing opinions, unique tastes and hobbies)"; (2) Felt as though you couldn't go out with friends on your own because your partner would feel left out or abandoned"; (3) Felt as though the relationship was too easygoing, in which any opinion or suggestion you expressed was immediately agreed with by your partner"; (4) "Felt suffocated, like you need to get away for a while, to rediscover what it was like to be 'me' rather than 'we'"; and (5) "Had plans with friends that you made without your partner and your partner asked to join at the last moment".

Dependent Measures. After reading several statements about a particular between-partner relationship tension, participants answered questions (in random order) about relationship challenges (relational boredom, conflict), couple activity engagement (novel, familiar activities), and relationship quality (relationship satisfaction, closeness) to determine if the primed between-partner tensions shaped people's perceptions of their relationship (i.e., challenges and outcomes).

Relationship challenges. Relational boredom in a close relationship was measured using one item, "How frequently do you feel bored in your relationship" on a Likert scale (where 1 = *not at all* and 7 = *completely*). Conflict in a close relationship

was measured using Braiker and Kelley's (1979) adapted conflict questionnaire, which consists of two items, (1) "How often do you feel you argue with your partner" and (2) "How often do you feel you are angry or resentful toward your partner" on a Likert scale (where 1 = *not very often* and 9 = *very often*). These two items were then averaged to create an overall score reflecting the total conflict existing in the close relationship.

Activity engagement. Activity engagement was measured using Harasymchuk and Peetz's (2013) Couple Activities Questionnaire. Participants were asked: (1) How likely is it that you will initiate more new and unfamiliar things with your partner in the near future (starting a new sport, seeing a new place, learning something new together with your partner); and (2) How likely is it that you will initiate more routine and familiar things with your partner in the near future (going to a familiar restaurant, watching a familiar movie at home with your partner, visiting a favourite destination), where 1 = *not at all likely* to 7 = *very likely*.

Relationship quality. Relationship satisfaction in a close relationship was measured using Hendrick's (1988) adapted Relationship Assessment Scale. This scale consists of three items, (1) "How often do you feel angry or resentful toward your partner?" (2) "How well do you feel you are meeting your partner's needs?" and (3) "In general, how satisfied do you feel in your relationship?", on a Likert scale (where 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *completely*). These items were then averaged to create an overall score reflecting the total relationship satisfaction existing in the close relationship. Closeness was measured using Aron et al.'s (1992) Inclusion of the Other in the Self Scale (see study 1).

Individual Difference Measure. Each participant answered several questions about approach- and avoidance-motivation before being randomly assigned to the relationship tensions to determine if specific motivations could increase or decrease the experience of particular relationship challenges and outcomes that arose as a result of the tensions.

Approach and avoidance motivation was measured using Elliot, Gable, and Mapes' (2006) approach-avoidance scale, modified to refer to romantic relationships. The scale consists of eight items. Four approach items (e.g., "I am trying to deepen my relationship with my partner") and four avoidance items (e.g., "I am trying to avoid disagreements and conflicts with my partner"), which were averaged to create a total approach motivation score and a total avoidance motivation score.

Results

An analysis of missing data indicated the missing data occurred completely at random (0.6-3.6%). Tests for outliers were conducted by creating z -scores for each variable and any z -score that was above or below the absolute value of $z = 3.29$ were subsequently deleted from the dataset. Further tests for outliers were conducted with the Mahalanobis distance, Cook's distance, and Leverage. Participants who violated the cut-off points for at least two of these tests were subsequently filtered out of the analysis. Tests of normality, skewness, and kurtosis were conducted, and indicated that the sample was not normal for several variables. The dataset was considered large enough to withstand violations of normality, skewness and kurtosis, and so further adjustments were not made. All means, standard deviations, and ranges for the individual and dependent measures are presented in Table 9.

Table 9
Descriptive statistics of dependent measures

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Possible Range</i>
Relational Boredom	2.05	1.02	1-5
Conflict	3.25	1.19	1-7
Novel Activities	4.65	1.54	1-7
Familiar Activities	5.03	1.45	1-7
Relationship Satisfaction	3.74	0.87	1-5
Closeness	5.02	1.71	1-7
Approach motivation	4.13	0.67	1-5
Avoidance motivation	3.86	0.64	1-5

Hypothesis 1: Between-partner tensions (when one person wants more novelty than their partner) will be associated with increased relational boredom but not increased conflict.

Two between-groups univariate analysis of variance were conducted in order to determine if participants randomly assigned to the lack of novelty condition reported greater levels of relational boredom in comparison to the other two between-partner relationship tensions (i.e., lack of independence and lack of closedness). For both analyses, two between-groups independent variables were used: relationship tension condition (lack of novelty, lack of closedness, and lack of independence) and gender. The dependent variables for each analysis were relational boredom and conflict (see Table 10). Contrary to my predictions, relational boredom did not differ across the three conditions, $F(2, 228) = .20, p = .82, \eta_p^2 = .002$. However, the lack of novelty condition ($M = 2.06$) was higher than the lack of independence condition ($M = 2.01$) for levels of reported relational boredom, although not the lack of closedness condition ($M = 2.12$). Additionally, levels of relational boredom did not differ between men and women, $F(2, 224) = 2.73, p = .07, \eta_p^2 = .02$.

Conflict, however, did differ, $F(2, 227) = 2.96, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .03$. More specifically, participants reported similar levels of conflict in the lack of novelty condition ($M = 2.99$) compared to the lack of closedness condition ($M = 3.30$), as well as in the lack of closedness condition ($M = 3.30$) compared to the lack of independence condition ($M = 3.45$). However, there was a marginally significant difference between the lack of novelty ($M = 2.99$) and the lack of independence conditions ($M = 3.45$), such that greater conflict was reported in the lack of independence condition. Additionally, there were significant differences in reported conflict between men and women, $F(2, 223) = 3.41, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .03$. More specifically, men ($M = 3.46$) reported greater levels of conflict overall than women ($M = 3.06$). Thus, I did not find support that a lack of novelty was associated with greater relational boredom when compared to the other between-partner tensions. For conflict, there was no increase in conflict in the lack of novelty condition compared to the other two tensions (lack of closedness and independence), and men reported more conflict overall than did women.¹⁴

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics of Relationship Challenges

Condition	Relationship Challenge			
	Relational Boredom		Conflict	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lack of Novelty	2.06	0.91	2.99	1.02
Lack of Closedness	2.12	1.09	3.30	1.26
Lack of Independence	2.01	0.95	3.45	1.23

*Note: there were no significant differences between a lack of novelty and a lack of predictability for relational boredom or conflict; there were no significant differences between a lack of closedness and a lack of openness for relational boredom or conflict; there were no significant differences between a lack of independence and a lack of dependence for boredom or conflict

Hypothesis 2: Between-partner tensions (when one person wants more novelty than their partner) will be associated with greater intentions to engage in novel activities in the near future.

A mixed-method analysis of variance was conducted in order to determine if between-partner tensions for novelty-predictability (that is, when one partner wants more novelty than the other) was associated with increased activity engagement. In particular, I assessed whether people asked to think about situations where they wanted more novelty than their partner would be more likely to report greater likelihood to engage in novel activities than familiar activities in comparison to the lack of closedness and lack of independence tensions (see Table 11). There were two between-groups independent variables: relationship tensions (lack of novelty, lack of closedness, and lack of independence) and gender. The within-groups dependent variable was activity engagement (novel activities and familiar activities). Tests of within-groups effects indicated no main effect existed for activity engagement, $F(1, 227) = 2.90, p = .09, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Tests of between-groups effects showed a significant main effect for condition, $F(2, 227) = 5.31, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .05$, such that people reported greater activity engagement in the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.11$) than in the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.50$). No significant differences existed between the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.50$) and the lack of independence condition ($M = 4.44$), or between the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.11$) and the lack of independence condition ($M = 4.44$). Furthermore, there was no gender main effect, $F(2, 227) = 1.37, p = .26, \eta_p^2 = .01$.

Lastly, the activity engagement by condition interaction was not significant, $F(2, 227) = .62, p = .54, \eta_p^2 = .01$. Although non-significant, I explored the means. Thus, participants were significantly more likely to report future engagement in novel activities if they were in the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.03$) than the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.30$). However, there were no significant differences between the lack of

novelty condition ($M = 4.30$) and the lack of independence condition ($M = 4.59$), or the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.03$) and the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.30$). For familiar activities, participants were marginally significantly more likely to report future engagement in familiar activities if they were in the lack of independence condition ($M = 5.13$) than if they were in the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.69$). In addition, participants were significantly more likely to report future familiar activity engagement if they were in the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.21$) than if they were in the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.69$). No significant differences existed for familiar activities between the lack of closedness condition ($M = 5.21$) and the lack of independence condition ($M = 5.13$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was not supported, such that participants assigned to the lack of novelty condition were not significantly more likely to report future novel activity engagement than familiar activity engagement.¹⁵

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics and Mean Differences for Activity Engagement

Condition	Activity Engagement			
	Novel Activities		Familiar Activities	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lack of Novelty	4.30	1.65	4.69	1.48
Lack of Closedness	5.03	1.45	5.21	1.38
Lack of Independence	4.59	1.49	5.13	1.38

*Note: MD = mean difference; * indicates significance at $p < .05$; ** indicates significance at $p < .01$ ¹⁶

Hypothesis 3: The positive association between the between-partner relationship tension for novelty and predictability (when the participant wanted more novelty but the partner did not) and the desire to engage in more novel activities will be stronger for people who score higher on approach-motivation (vs. lower).

In order to determine if the positive association between a lack of novelty and activity engagement (novel and familiar activities) was weaker for people scoring higher

on approach motivation, two moderated regression analyses were conducted using Haye's Process. The independent variable for this analysis was total lack of novelty; the dependent variable was novel activity engagement. The overall model was significant, $F(3, 72) = 3.59, p = .018, R^2 = .16$, indicating that 16% of the variance associated with the relationship between a lack of novelty and novel activity engagement was explained by approach motivation. More specifically, a significant main effect existed for approach motivation, $b = .89, t(74) = 2.99, p = .01$. In other words, increases in approach motivation significantly predicted increases in novel activity engagement. In addition, a marginally significant main effect existed for lack of novelty, $b = .47, t(74) = 1.87, p = .07$, suggesting that decreases in novelty in the relationship predicted increases in novel activity engagement. Lastly, the approach by novelty interaction was not significant, $b = -.18, t(72) = -.39, p = .70$.

Research Question 1: Will the between-partner tension for novelty and predictability (where one person wants more novelty than their partner) be associated with lower levels of relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness)?

Two between-groups univariate analysis of variances were conducted in order to determine if participants randomly assigned to the lack of novelty condition reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction and closeness in comparison to the other two relationship tensions (i.e., lack of independence and lack of closedness). For both analyses, two between-groups independent variables were used: relationship tension condition (lack of novelty, lack of closedness, and lack of independence) and gender. The dependent variables entered separately into each analysis were relationship satisfaction and closeness (see Table 12).

Tests of the between-groups effects indicated that no significant differences existed for relationship satisfaction across conditions, $F(2, 226) = 1.88, p = .16, \eta_p^2 = .02$. More specifically, participants randomly assigned to the lack of novelty group ($M = 3.61$) reported similar levels of relationship satisfaction as those randomly assigned to the lack of closedness ($M = 3.87$) and lack of independence ($M = 3.61$) conditions. Furthermore, no significant differences existed in levels of relationship satisfaction between men and women, $F(2, 226) = .23, p = .79, \eta_p^2 = .002$. For closeness, tests of the between-groups effects indicated that no significant differences existed for closeness across conditions $F(2, 229) = 1.47, p = .23, \eta_p^2 = .01$. More specifically, participants reported similar levels of closeness in the lack of novelty condition ($M = 4.76$) as those randomly assigned to the lack of closedness ($M = 5.05$) and lack of independence ($M = 5.32$) conditions. Furthermore, there were no differences between men and women for closeness, $F(2, 229) = .06, p = .94, \eta_p^2 = .001$. Thus, participants reported statistically similar levels of relationship satisfaction and closeness across the lack of novelty, lack of closedness, and lack of independence conditions, and between men and women.

Table 12
*Descriptive Statistics of Relationship Quality*¹⁷

Condition	Relationship Quality			
	Relationship Satisfaction		Closeness	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lack of Novelty	3.62	.80	4.80	1.71
Lack of Closedness	3.87	.91	5.04	1.82
Lack of Independence	3.69	.89	5.14	1.63

Discussion

Study 2 aimed to determine which between-partner relationship tensions best predicted specific relationship challenges and outcomes. More specifically, participants

were randomly assigned to imagine a between-partner tension to determine if this would lead to increases in relational boredom, conflict, and novel activity engagement.

A summary of results shows that there were no significant differences between tensions for relational boredom; however, the hypothesis that the lack of novelty condition would *not* be associated with more conflict (versus the lack of closedness and independence conditions) was supported. That is, the lack of novelty condition was not significantly different from the lack of closedness condition in their association with conflict; in addition, the lack of independence condition was significantly more strongly correlated with conflict than the lack of novelty condition. Interestingly, men reported more conflict overall than did women. Additionally, no significant differences between conditions existed for novel and familiar couple activities, nor were there any significant differences between conditions for reports of relationship satisfaction or closeness. Thus, the between-partner relationship tension in which participants experienced a lack of novelty but their partner did not was not the strongest predictor of relational boredom or novel activity engagement.

General Discussion

The purpose of this project was to establish correlational and causal links between relationship tensions and relationship challenges and outcomes. Importantly, these studies found that the novelty-predictability tension was significantly linked with increased relationship challenges (relational boredom and conflict), reduced relationship quality (relationship satisfaction and closeness), and increased novel activity engagement. These links were established correlationally; however, this project was not able to establish

causal links for the between-partner relationship tensions and relationship challenges and outcomes.

Extending Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) Work on Relationship Tensions

This project focused on the novelty-predictability relationship tension as outlined by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). More specifically, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) stated that couples can experience either too much or too little novelty, expressed as a tension either *within* the person or *between* the partners. These researchers established through qualitative interviews that when couples are able to balance novelty and predictability needs in the relationship, relationship quality increases (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Baxter, 1990). Importantly, expressions of general needs in the relationship (when both partners need more novelty) can promote relational growth; however, expressions of opposing needs in the relationship (when one partner needs more novelty than the other partner) can decrease relationship quality and increase conflict.

Importantly, Baxter and Montgomery (1996) stress that there is not only one need in a close relationship; rather, there are many and they fluctuate in terms of severity. More specifically, these researchers argue that close relationships should maintain a balance in openness and closedness needs, independence and dependence needs, and – importantly – novelty and predictability needs. Thus, novelty and predictability needs are just as important as openness and closedness needs, which are just as important as independence and dependence needs. When relationships fail to balance all needs effectively, they suffer. I replicated this theory by examining correlations between all three of the relationship tensions. Findings indicated that all three of the relationship tensions were highly correlated, with Pearson *r* correlations as high as $r = .45$. Thus, this

suggests that novelty and predictability needs are just as important as openness and closedness needs as well as independence and dependence needs for relationships. As was argued by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), close relationships function as a series of needs; there is a give and take between partners that must meet the needs of both people involved in order to maintain relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, I extended Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) work by examining additional relationship challenges and outcomes using quantitative methodology. More specifically, I established a strong positive link between internal tensions (within the person) and relational boredom. Baxter and Simon (1993) began a quantitative investigation into internal (within the self) relationship tensions and their link with three distinct types of maintenance strategies (contact, romance, and avoidance). In this research, the authors were able to establish correlational links between experiences of excess predictability in the relationship with increases in romantic efforts, including the supplementation of more surprises and novelty in the relationship. Importantly, this research did not assess standardized measures of relationship challenges like conflict and relational boredom. My research adds to this work by establishing correlational links with standardized measures for relational boredom and conflict and both internal and between-partner relationship tensions. Strong associations were made between the novelty-predictability tension and relational boredom and conflict. That is, an increase in a relationship tension represented by a lack of novelty was significantly associated with increases in relational boredom and conflict; furthermore, an increase in novelty in the relationship was associated with reductions in relational boredom.

Baxter's model of novelty and predictability describes predictability as a state of routine and familiarity in the relationship that can lead to feelings of boredom between partners. Importantly, although recognized as a potential consequence to the experience of excess predictability, relational boredom has not been linked with predictability. My work adds to this model by presenting evidence to suggest that the constructs of relational boredom and excess predictability are similar (e.g., lack of surprise, lack of novelty) and can thus share similar consequences for relationships (e.g., detachment between partners, reduced communication, Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012).

Also an important addition, gender differences alluded to the fact that men experience greater feelings of excess predictability in their relationships than women (who reported feeling a more balanced relationship in terms of novelty and predictability). This was interesting given the additional finding that men reported more conflict when experiencing a lack of novelty than did women, but no more feelings of relational boredom than women. Thus, although significant links were established between excess predictability and relational boredom, why do men not feel both increases in predictability and relational boredom? These findings suggest that although men experience more predictability in their relationships, this is not associated with feelings of relational boredom, indicating that men may be more comfortable with familiarity and routine than with more novelty in the relationship.

I also extended Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) work on relationship tensions by investigating relationship quality with the addition of a second relationship outcome, namely novel activity engagement. An important consequence to relational boredom that has been established in the relationship literature is increased novel activity engagement

(e.g., Harasychuk & Fehr, in prep, Harasymchuk et al., in prep). When experiencing a deceleration of self-expansion (that is, relational boredom), novel activity engagement is a strategy that can be sought by couples in an attempt to increase excitement between partners (Aron & Aron, 1986). This relationship outcome was not examined previously using a standardized measure by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) or Baxter and Simon (1993) as a potential consequence to the experience of the novelty-predictability relationship tension, although it was established through the romance maintenance strategy that increases in surprises and novelty were employed by couples when experiences of excess predictability existed. This project established a very strong and positive correlation for both internal and between-partner relationship tensions (where at least one partner experienced a lack of novelty) and intentions to engage in novel couple activities in the near future. Thus, replicating Baxter and Simon's (1993) work using a standardized measure for novel activity engagement, greater experiences of predictability in a relationship was associated with intentions to engage in more novel activities in the near future. These findings suggest that Aron and Aron's (1986) theory that novel activity engagement is a strategy to reduce relational boredom for couples is a valid one; furthermore, this research suggests that dating and married people are aware of this strategy and intend to engage in novel activities when faced with relationship tensions in the form of excess predictability in the relationship. Importantly, there was a strong negative correlation between intentions to engage in novel activities and relational boredom, further supporting the theory of self-expansion put forward by Aron and Aron (1986).

To summarize, I complemented Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) work on relationship tensions by examining them using standardized measures in a quantitative method. Furthermore, I established significant links with increased conflict and reduced relationship quality, thus replicating findings proposed by Baxter and Montgomery (1996). Importantly, I also established significant links with relational boredom and novel activity engagement using standardized measures, which had not been done previously by Baxter and associates.

Extending Aron and Aron's (1986) Work on Self-Expansion

Aron and Aron (1986) stipulated that people are consistently searching for methods to expand their sense of self and that this functions at the individual level as well as at the level of romantic relationships. Importantly, these researchers argued that when couples experience relational boredom, one strategy is to engage in novel activities. Novel activity engagement serves as a strategy in which couples can increase both excitement and relationship quality, with benefits that also include self-expansion and growth (Aron & Aron, 1986).

This project adds to Aron and Aron's (1986) work on self-expansion by investigating perceived internal (within the self) as well as between-partner relationship tensions. More specifically, Aron and Aron (1986) argue that increased novelty in a relationship is beneficial and will increase relationship satisfaction for couples. However, these researchers do not specify in their theory of self-expansion what happens when only one person in a relationship feels a need for more expansion and growth; that is, when one person expresses needs for more novelty but their partner does not. Findings in this research suggest that it is not always the case that both partners will simultaneously

express growth needs, promoting relationship growth as a result of a common goal.

Rather, my work suggests that there are times in relationships when partners can express opposing needs, creating a tension that may not always support increases in novel activity engagement.

Importantly, Aron and Aron (1986) suggest that continual self-expansion can result in a “system overload”. To prevent this from occurring, people engage in the second state of the self-expansion model: integration. In this stage, people strive to incorporate their new experiences and knowledge gained from the previous stage into their current self-concept. During this time, they seek out predictable activities in their lives to increase their sense of stability. Consequently, what happens when one partner in the relationship expresses growth needs, but the other partner in the relationship expresses stability needs? Aron and Aron (1986) have not empirically tested this question. Thus, my work extends their theory of self-expansion by investigating between-partner relationship tensions. Importantly, my work suggests that when at least one partner is expressing novelty needs (while the other is expressing predictability needs), this is associated with increased novel activity engagement. This may be a contributing factor, however, to the consequence of increased conflict in between-partner tension situations.

Along the same vein, Aron and Aron (1986) allude to the fact that seeking out more novel, self-expanding activities can result in a “system overload”, which encourages partners to seek out stabilizing activities that provide more routine and predictability. Thus, an excess of novel activities would lead people to seek out more predictable, stabilizing activities (Aron & Aron, 1986). Aron and Aron’s (1986) notion of

a “system overload” suggests that there can be too much novelty, similar to the theory put forward by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) that suggests too much novelty or predictability can be a disadvantage for couples. However, these researchers do not specify what kinds of consequences may arise during this time. Aron and Aron (1986) do suggest that during a system overload, people seek out predictable activities to regain a sense of personal stability. Consequently, if growth needs are met through novel activity engagement, will a system overload garner more familiar activity engagement? My work suggests that this may indeed be the case, as the internal discrepancy score for novelty and predictability (where higher scores meant lower levels of novelty were experienced than was ideally wanted) was significantly associated with decreases in familiar activity engagement; furthermore, the correlational finding that a lack of predictability was associated with increased familiar activities, although non-significant, was in line with this question.

To summarize, I have extended Aron and Aron’s (1986) work on the self-expansion theory by investigating two important new questions: (1) do partners express growth needs (novelty needs) at the same time?; and (2) what happens when one partner wants more growth (novelty) but the other partner wants more stability (predictability)? My work suggests that between-partner relationship tensions can exist in relationships, as was originally theorized by Baxter and Montgomery (1996), and that couples do not always express novelty (i.e., growth needs) at the same time. Furthermore, my work suggests that when these opposing needs are expressed in relationships, couples will, indeed, intend to increase their novel activity engagement in the near future, regardless of the perceived expression of predictability needs by the other partner. Lastly, my work

also suggests (although non-significantly) that predictability (stability) needs can promote intentions to increase familiar activity engagement in the near future, a correlation that is in line with the notion of experiencing Aron and Aron's (1986) notion of a "system overload". As well, novelty needs can promote intentions to decrease familiar activity engagement in the near future.

Extending the General Understanding of the Relationship Process

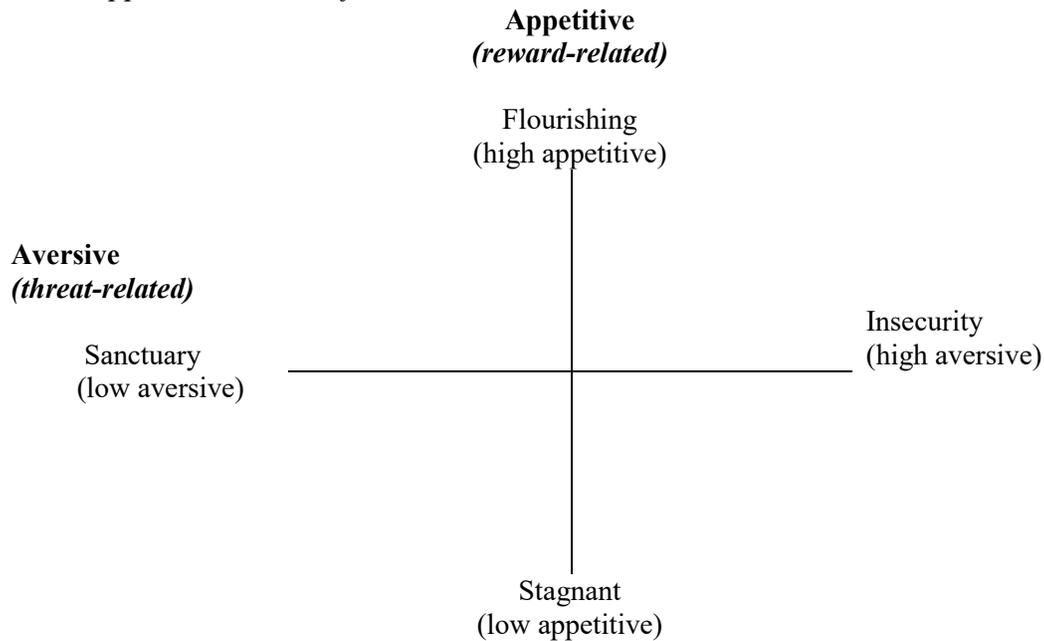
Generally, research on close relationships has centered on relationship challenges like lies, infidelity, jealousy, and conflict (Braiker & Kelly, 1979; Kowalski, 2000). The notion put forward by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) that close relationships function via a series of relationship tensions has not been a major focus in the relationship literature—especially the tension concerning novelty and predictability needs in relationships. This tension adds to the relationship literature by specifying that both novelty needs and predictability needs can be rewarding for close relationships; but that when novelty and predictability are felt by relationship partners to excess, relationships can suffer.

Appetitive-aversive framework. The novelty-predictability relationship tension fits well with a common close relationship framework in the relationship literature that was put forward by Gable and Reis (2001; 2006), namely the appetitive-aversive framework (see Figure 1). Importantly, this framework also functions on a series of dimensions, and has not been previously linked with the novelty-predictability relationship tension. More specifically, aversive processes relate to challenges like conflict (Harasymchuk & Fehr, in prep), and are manifested in behaviour, motivation, and affect that are associated with avoiding threats in a relationship (e.g., jealousy,

frustration). Aversive processes function on a dimension that ranges from sanctuary (at low levels of aversiveness) to insecurity (at high levels of aversiveness). Appetitive processes, however, relate to challenges like relational boredom (Harasymchuk & Fehr, in prep), and are manifested in behaviour, motivation, and affect that are associated with approaching rewards in a relationship (e.g., excitement, growth). Appetitive processes function on a dimension that ranges from stagnant (at low levels of appetitiveness) to flourishing (at high levels of appetitiveness). The novelty-predictability tension fits well onto the appetitive dimension and the notion that close relationships can flourish when there is the presence of suitable novelty in relationships, but can become stagnant when there is the absence of suitable novelty in relationships.

Harasymchuk and Fehr (in prep) have begun an investigation into the stagnant (low levels of appetitiveness) portion of Gable and Reis's (2001, 2006) appetitive-aversive model with a relationship challenge that was investigated in this project, namely relational boredom. These researchers theorize that relational boredom fits well with an absence of novel rewards in relationships (stagnant appetitiveness) rather than the more common conception in the relationship literature that relational boredom is a similar, high threat challenge like conflict (insecure aversiveness). Importantly, my research has established strong correlational links between relational boredom and internal relationship tensions for novelty and predictability (in which participants reported a lack of novelty in their relationships). Thus, my research adds to general relationship literature by further suggesting that challenges like relational boredom and the novelty-predictability tension best lie on the appetitive dimension, and best represent an absence of rewards in close relationships rather than a high threat phenomenon.

Figure 1
Appetitive-aversive framework



Gable and Reis 2001 table reproduction (Harasymchuk & Fehr, in prep)

Relationship satisfaction. In the relationship literature, autonomy, closeness, and conflict situations are generally compared to levels of general relationship satisfaction (e.g., Hendrick, 1988) as a measurement of how relationship challenges and outcomes affect relationship satisfaction over time for couples. Specifically, novelty needs have generally not been a focus for research as a potential challenge that can increase or decrease relationship quality in research. My project extends this line of thinking by investigating the importance of novelty and predictability needs in close relationships. That is, I investigate all three of the relationship tensions (openness-closedness, independence-dependence, novelty-predictability) as important relationship challenges that couples face over time.

Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and Baxter (1990) have specifically addressed the importance of both novelty and predictability in close relationships, stating that an

unbalance of these two equally good needs can elicit reductions in relationship quality, just as imbalances in openness and autonomy needs can elicit reductions in relationship quality. Extending this line of inquiry, my project linked imbalances in all three relationship tensions to reductions in relationship quality, suggesting that novelty and predictability needs are just as important in the study of close relationships as relationship challenges like conflict and relationship outcomes like openness.

Importantly, my work follows the guideline set by Self-Determination Theory, namely that researchers should investigate relationship satisfaction in terms of multiple relationship needs rather than as one general relationship need. More specifically, my project has touched on the fact that couples experience different types of needs that, if not met, can exert their own influence on the relationship quality of the close relationship. Thus, thinking about relationship satisfaction in terms of openness, autonomy, *as well as* novelty needs, rather than as one general relationship satisfaction need, can increase our understanding of the dynamics of close relationships and how we can best promote their well-being.

Gender, relationship length, and correlations between relationship tensions

Several interesting findings were evident from investigating gender and relationship length. More specifically, it appears that men feel significantly closer to their partners when they experience reduced levels of independence, novelty, and closedness. There was no significant relationship for women; however, the opposite trend existed, such that women felt closer to their partners when they experienced greater levels of novelty, closedness, and independence. Furthermore, men reported greater experiences of all three of the relationship tensions overall than did women, including greater

predictability in the relationship than novelty, whereas women felt more of a balance between predictability and novelty.

For relationship length, longer relationships experienced greater reductions in novelty and greater reductions in independence. This is in line with Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) expression of the novelty-predictability tension and the independence-dependence tension. More specifically, couples who have been together for greater lengths of time will express greater dependency and routine as they move forward in their relationship; this is a natural growth in relationships and does not necessarily mean that relationships are suffering the longer they are together. Situations between partners get more comfortable as couples learn about each other and reveal secrets as they open up more about their past, their present, and their future wishes and endeavors. Thus, longer relationships have greater experiences of a lack of novelty and a lack of independence because they are spending more time together and behave more as a unit (one "we" rather than two "me"s). When these experiences become too great, as Baxter and Montgomery (1996) suggest can occur for relationships, couples need only to supplement proper maintenance strategies. For instance, as was found in Baxter and Simon (1993), increasing romantic efforts to instill spontaneity in the relationship can increase feelings of novelty; additionally, as was found in my research, increasing novel activity engagement can decrease feelings of relational boredom.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of the present investigation, including the reliance on individual reports. This project examines experiences of relationship tensions, relationship challenges, couple activity engagement, and relationship quality from the

perspective of one relationship partner. More specifically, I examined internal and between-partner relationship tensions through a self-report measure provided by one relationship partner. Thus, there was no way to determine if both partners felt the same type of tension, or if only one partner felt it. Future research might determine if a relationship tension for novelty and predictability can be felt by one and not the other partner in a close relationship to elicit novelty needs, or whether both partners must experience it in order for increased novelty to occur.

Furthermore, this project has garnered a snapshot of past relationship tensions and relationship challenges and outcome experiences. It will be useful for future research to investigate the experience of these constructs on a more ongoing basis. For example, it would be useful to conduct a daily-diary study over the course of a few months to establish multiple points of relationship tensions, and relationship challenges and outcomes, and whether novel or familiar activity engagement was actually engaged in rather than examining intentions to engage in novel or familiar activities in the near future.

As well, this project assessed relationship satisfaction using Hendrick's (1988) relationship satisfaction scale, which garnered information on general relationship satisfaction needs. Future research should investigate relationship satisfaction needs in terms of the three specific relationship tensions (e.g., does your partner meet your *novelty* needs). This will be helpful to garner a greater understanding of how the relationship tensions individually exert influence on the relationship quality of close relationships.

Moreover, the internal tension measure for study 1 could only assess a relationship tension in the direction of a lack of novelty (representing the mean of the

discrepancy between participants' current experiences of novelty and predictability and their ideal experiences of novelty and predictability, as well as an increase in novelty (representing the current experiences of the relationship, where higher numbers meant more novelty). Future research might employ a manipulation prime in order to randomly assign participants to each relationship tension need (too much or too little novelty as well as too much or too little predictability) in order to better understand how each aspect of the relationship tension can affect the dynamic of close relationships.

The present investigation examined relationship length as a possible covariate and did not find any significant interactions for the novelty-predictability tension. However, a more concrete comparison of relationship length in future research (i.e., collecting a sample of shorter relationships versus longer relationships and directly comparing them) might elicit a greater understanding of exactly when novelty needs can become an issue for close relationships, as newer relationships may not feel a lack of novelty to the same degree as older relationships.

Lastly, there was no evidence that between-partner tensions for novelty were correlated with increased relational boredom (or caused greater perceptions of relational boredom in Study 2). However, there was evidence in Study 1 that internal tensions for novelty were linked to increased relational boredom. Thus, in future research, researchers should extend the Study 2 methodology to internal tensions.

Conclusion

This project investigated imbalances in novelty and predictability (as well as openness and closedness, and independence and dependence) and their associations with such relationship challenges as relational boredom and conflict, and relationship

outcomes such as novel and familiar couple activity engagement, as well as relationship satisfaction and closeness. Importantly, this project extended research presented by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) regarding novelty and predictability by linking this tension with increases in relational boredom, conflict, and novel activity engagement, as well as with reductions in relationship satisfaction and closeness. Novelty and predictability needs are equally essential in close relationships; thus, it is important to further investigate this interesting and understudied relationship tension to better understand how challenges like relational boredom and outcomes like novel activity engagement can influence relationship dynamics.

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Footnotes

¹ Participants were asked about excessive predictability, openness, and dependence. *T*-tests indicated no significant differences existed between novelty and predictability ($t(116) = .09, p = .93$) or openness and closedness ($t(116) = 1.75, p = .08$). Significant differences existed for independence and dependence ($t(116) = -2.30, p = .02$), but this was not the focus of this paper. Thus, it did not matter which type of between-partner tension was shown to participants.

² I want predictability, partner wants novelty $M = 3.92; SD = 1.57; Range = 1-7$
 I want openness, partner wants closedness $M = 3.41; SD = 1.60; Range = 1-7$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence $M = 3.72; SD = 1.71; Range = 1-7$

³ I want Predictability, Partner wants Novelty: Men $M = 4.58$; Women: $M = 3.43; p < .001$
 I want Openness, Partner wants Closedness: Men: $M = 3.68$; Women: $M = 3.23; p = .12$
 I want Dependence, Partner wants Independence: Men: $M = 3.96$; Women: $M = 3.54; p = .19$

⁴ I want predictability, partner wants novelty: Relational Boredom $r = -.01$; Conflict $r = .22$
 I want openness, partner wants closedness: Relational Boredom $r = .31$; Conflict $r = .52$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence: Relational Boredom $r = .10$; Conflict $r = .37$

⁵ I want predictability, partner wants novelty: Novel Activities $r = .29$; Familiar activities $r = -.04$
 I want closedness, partner wants openness: Novel Activities $r = .17$; Familiar activities $r = .06$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence: Novel Activities $r = .31$; Familiar $r = -.17$

⁶ I want predictability, partner wants novelty: Men: Novel Activities $r = .33$; Familiar $r = .25$;
 Women: Novel Activities $r = .22$; Familiar Activities $r = -.11$
 I want openness, partner wants closedness: Men: Novel Activities $r = .15$; Familiar $r = .004$
 Women: Novel Activities $r = .12$; Familiar Activities $r = -.39$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence: Men: Novel Activities $r = .09$; Familiar $r = -.10$
 Women: Novel Activities $r = .44^{***}$; Familiar Activities $r = -.21$

⁷ I want predictability, partner wants novelty: Satisfaction $r = -.04$; Closeness $r = .08$
 I want openness, partner wants closedness: Satisfaction $r = .06$; Closeness $r = -.37^{**}$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence: Satisfaction $r = -.04$; Closeness $r = -.22^*$

⁸ I want predictability, partner wants novelty: Men: satisfaction $r = -.001$; Closeness $r = .02$;
 Women: satisfaction $r = -.02$; Closeness $r = -.003$
 I want openness, partner wants closedness: Men: satisfaction $r = -.12$; Closeness $r = .02$; Women:
 satisfaction $r = -.58$; Closeness $r = -.44$
 I want dependence, partner wants independence: Men: satisfaction $r = -.22$; Closeness $r = .07$;
 Women: satisfaction $r = -.12$; Closeness $r = -.23$

⁹ I want Predictability, Partner wants Novelty: Relational Boredom $b = -.04$
 I want Openness, Partner wants Closedness : Relational Boredom $b = .23$
 I want Dependence, Partner wants Independence: Relational Boredom $b = -.04$

¹⁰ I want Predictability, Partner wants Novelty: Novel Activities $b = .28$; Familiar $b = .02$
 I want Openness, Partner wants Closedness: Novel Activities $b = .01$; Familiar $b = -.17$
 I want Dependence, Partner wants Independence: Novel Activities $b = .24$; Familiar $b = -.07$

¹¹ Although, the between-partner tensions for novelty were not correlated with increased relational boredom in Study 1, the decision to assess between-partner tensions (rather than within-partner tensions) was decided a priori and the two studies were run concurrently.

¹² I investigated other relationship tensions: lack of predictability, dependence, and openness.

¹³ *Lack of predictability.* (1) “You felt your relationship needed more predictability but didn’t think your partner felt the same way”; (2) Felt as though things were unpredictable and unfamiliar and your partner didn’t seem interested in changing things”; (3) “You suggested something (e.g., an activity) that was at home and relaxed but your partner seemed uninterested and wanted to go out instead”; (4) “You wanted “simple bedroom sex” but your partner wanted to try something new”; and (5) “Had a date in which your partner suggested you spend time out of the home together, when you wanted to stay in”.

Lack of openness. (1) “You asked your partner about a time in his/her past and he/she didn’t open up to you”; (2) “You asked your partner about something personal and he/she became defensive and secretive”; (3) “You suggested telling a childhood story to each other, but your partner seemed uninterested”; (4) “Felt uncertain, like you didn’t really know your partner because he/she keeps things private”; and (5) “You wanted to ask your partner something personal but were unsure if he/she would talk to you about it”.

Lack of dependence. (1) “Felt like you and your partner were too independent and that there was little dependence left in your relationship (e.g., similar opinions, similar tastes and hobbies)”; (2) “Felt left out or abandoned because your partner kept going out with his/her friends without you”; (3) Felt as though the relationship was marked by disagreement between you and your partner, in which you were always on opposite ends of an opinion”; (4) “Felt alone because your partner hadn’t spent a lot of time with you lately, like your relationship was made up of two ‘me’s’ instead of one ‘we’”; and (5) “Your partner invited other people to come along on an activity that you thought would be just the two of you”.

¹⁴ Relationship satisfaction was examined as a covariate for relationship challenges and between-partner tensions. No significant interaction existed for relational boredom. For conflict, the interaction was significant, $F(2, 224) = 4.20, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .04$; the pattern remained the same. Gender and relationship length were examined. However, no interactions were significant. Univariate Anovas were conducted for lack of predictability, openness, and dependence. No significant differences existed between conditions for relational boredom. For conflict significant differences existed, $F(2, 277) = 3.48, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .03$. More conflict was reported in lack of dependence ($M = 3.52$) than lack of openness ($M = 3.02$). Gender and relationship length were examined as covariates. No interactions were significant. Relationship satisfaction was examined as a covariate. No significant interaction was found for relational boredom. For conflict, the interaction was significant, $F(2, 222) = 3.95, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03$.

¹⁵ The following covariates were examined for lack of novelty, closedness, and independence: gender, relationship length, and relationship satisfaction. No interactions were significant. A mixed-Model Anova was conducted for lack of predictability, openness, and dependence. No main effect existed for condition; a main effect existed for activity engagement, $F(1, 226) = 17.05, p < .001, R^2 = .07$. No significant interaction was found. The following covariates were examined: gender, relationship length. No interactions were significant. Relationship satisfaction was examined. A significant interaction existed, $F(1, 223) = 5.42, p = .01, R^2 = .05$.

¹⁶Lack of Openness: Novel Activities: $M = 4.77; SD = 1.40$; Familiar: $M = 5.08; SD = 1.47$
Lack of Predictability: Novel Activities: $M = 4.46; SD = 1.65$; Familiar: $M = 4.81; SD = 1.39$
Lack of Dependence: Novel activities: $M = 4.76; SD = 1.52$; Familiar: $M = 5.29; SD = 1.46$

¹⁷Lack of Predictability: Satisfaction: $M = 3.80$; $SD = .84$; Closeness: $M = 5.26$; $SD = 1.81$
Lack of Openness: Satisfaction: $M = 3.86$; $SD = .85$; Closeness: $M = 5.03$; $SD = 1.68$
Lack of Dependence: Satisfaction: $M = 3.59$; $SD = .94$; Closeness: $M = 4.88$; $SD = 1.82$

Appendix A**Recruitment Notice (Studies 1 and 2)**

Experiences in Close Relationships
(10 min or less/\$0.50)

We are looking for participants who are currently in a close relationship (i.e., marital, dating, common-law) and have been for at least 1 year. You will be asked to answer a few brief questions regarding the interactions you have with your partner as well as some questions about your general relationship experiences (on the site Qualtrics.com). The study will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and you will receive US \$0.50 in compensation for your time. Your responses will be anonymous. This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, Canada (14-XXX).

**On the last page of the survey, you'll find a completion code.
Please copy your completion code here in order to receive compensation:**

Appendix B

Informed Consent (Studies 1 and 2)

The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent is intended to provide sufficient information, such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study. This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, Canada (14-106).

Study Title: Experiences in Close Relationships

Study Personnel Contact: The Principal Investigators of this project are Janelle Lebreton (Graduate student, janellelebreton@cmail.carleton.ca) and Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Faculty, cheryl_harasymchuk@carleton.ca; phone: 1 613-520-2600 ext. 3056) from Carleton University.

Contact in case of concerns: Should you have any ethical concerns about this study then please contact Dr. Shelley Brown (Chair, Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 1 613-520-2600, ext. 1505; Shelley_Brown@carleton.ca). For any other concerns related to this study please contact Dr. Joanna Pozzulo (Chair, Dept. of Psychology, 613-520-2600 x 1412; Joanna.Pozzulo@carleton.ca).

Purpose and Task Requirements: The general purpose of this study is to examine experiences in close relationships. You will be asked to complete a few brief questions regarding the interactions you have with your partner as well as some questions about your general relationship experiences. The complete study will take approximately 10-15 minutes. We cannot explain our hypotheses fully at this point. However, at the end of the study you will receive a debriefing statement in which we outline our research question and hypotheses.

Potential Risk and Discomfort: We do not anticipate any psychological or physical risk to participants. However, keep in mind that you may skip questions or discontinue the survey at any time without any penalties.

Compensation: You will receive \$0.50 US dollars through MTurk payments for your participation.

Anonymity/Confidentiality: The data collected in this study are anonymous; we will not ask you to list any identifying information. In potential publications of this research, only aggregated data (means and correlations) will be reported. Anonymous data might be shared with trusted colleagues. We collect data through the software Qualtrics, which uses servers with multiple layers of security to protect the privacy of the data (e.g., encrypted websites and pass-word protected storage). The data will be kept on the Qualtrics account for 3 years before being deleted. Please note that Qualtrics is hosted by a server located in the USA. The United States Patriot Act permits U.S. law enforcement officials, for the purpose of an anti-terrorism investigation, to seek a court order that

allows access to the personal records of any person without that person's knowledge. In view of this we cannot absolutely guarantee the full confidentiality and anonymity of your data. With your consent to participate in this study you acknowledge this.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. At any point during the study you have the right to not complete certain questions or to withdraw with no penalty whatsoever. If you decide to withdraw from the study at any point you will still receive full compensation for your participation. We ask that if you decide to drop out from the study that you press “next” and read the Debriefing form at the end of the study where you will also retrieve your completion code.

I have read the above description of the study concerning romantic relationship experiences. The data collected will be used in research publications and/or for teaching purposes. My endorsement indicates that I agree to participate in the study, and this in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights. I am at least 18 years of age.

Agree

Disagree - exit

Appendix C

Survey Materials

Thank you for participating in the 'Experiences in Close Relationships' study! This study will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please read each question carefully.

Demographic Questions (Studies 1, 2)

1. What is your age? _____ years
2. What is your sex?
 - a) Female
 - b) Male
 - c) Other
3. Please indicate your highest level of education.
 - a) High school diploma or less
 - b) College diploma
 - c) University degree
 - d) Masters or Doctoral degree
 - e) Other (please specify): _____
4. Please indicate your occupation. _____
5. Please select the response that *best* describes your current relationship status?
 - a) Single, not dating
 - b) Single, casually dating
 - c) In a serious dating relationship
 - d) In a serious dating relationship and living together
 - e) In a serious dating relationship, living together, and engaged
 - f) Married
 - g) Common-law
 - h) Other (please specify): _____
6. In total, how long have you and your partner been in a close relationship with one another? _____ years
7. If married, is this your first marriage?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
8. Do you have any children living with you and your partner?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

(If answered "Yes" to the previous question, will be redirected to following question)

9. Are one or more of your children under the age of 2 years?
- a) Yes
 - b) No

For the rest of the survey, you will be asked a series of questions concerning experiences in your close relationship and questions about your personal preferences. Please read each question carefully.

Much worse 1 2 3 4 5 Much better

4. How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?

Never 1 2 3 4 5 Always

5. To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Completely

6. How much do you love your partner?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

7. How many problems are there in your relationship?

None at all 1 2 3 4 5 Many

Relational Boredom Scale (Harasymchuk & Fehr, 2012)

Now we will ask you some general questions about your relationship.

Please respond to the following statements in terms of how well they each characterize your close relationship (dating , marital, common law). For each statement, please click on the circle that best represents your rating on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1= not at all true and 7 = completely true.

1. dull

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true	somewhat true		moderately true	very true		completely true

2. full of surprises

3. sick and tired of your partner

4. there is a spark in the relationship

5. feel nothing

6. lots of fun

7. lack of conversation

8. interested in your partner

9. feel unfulfilled in the relationship

10. feels like a chore

11. full of romance

12. not sharing feelings with each other

13. feels like you want change

14. thrilling

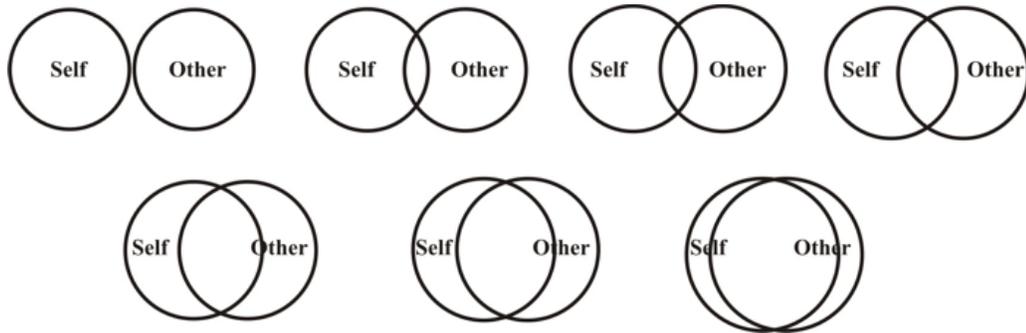
15. exciting

Please rate this question on the following scale.
How frequently do you feel bored in your relationship?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
never sometimes often all the time

The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

Please consider the following pictures with regard to your relationship with your close relationship partner (i.e., one circle represents the self and the other circle represents the other, that is, your partner). Please select the picture that best describes your relationship with your current partner.



Couple activities questionnaire (Harasymchuk & Peetz, 2013)

Please read the following questions carefully and provide your answer using the scale that is provided for you.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all likely Somewhat likely Very likely

Overall, how likely is it that you will do more new and unfamiliar things with your partner in the near future (starting a new sport, seeing a new place, learning something new together with your partner)?

Overall, how likely is it that you will do more comforting and familiar things with your partner in the near future (watching a favorite movie, having comfort food, snuggling up for TV, seeing a familiar band in concert)?

Study 2: Primed Relationship Tensions and their Effects on Relationship Challenges and Outcomes**Independent Variable (Within Subjects)**

The following scale is presented after the demographics scale but before the independent variable.

Approach-Avoidance scale (Elliot, Gable, Mapes, 2006)

Please read the following statements and select on the following scale the degree to which you agree with each statement.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am trying to deepen my relationship with my partner.
2. I am trying to move toward growth and development in my relationship.
3. I am trying to enhance the bonding and intimacy with my partner.
4. I am trying to share many fun and meaningful experiences with my partner.
5. I am trying to avoid disagreements and conflicts with my partner.
6. I am trying to stay away from situations that could harm my partner.
7. I am trying to avoid getting embarrassed, betrayed, or hurt by my partner.
8. I am trying to make sure that nothing bad happens in my relationship.

4. Felt a lack of spark in the bedroom (i.e., sex not exciting) and your partner expressed disappointment when you suggested trying something different in the bedroom.
5. You felt exasperated when your partner didn't want to go out with you on date night, and instead he/she wanted to stay home.

Novelty-predictability tension (lack of predictability)

1. You felt your relationship needed more predictability but didn't think your partner felt the same way.
2. Felt as though things were unpredictable and unfamiliar and your partner didn't seem interested in changing things.
3. You suggested something (e.g., an activity) that was at home and relaxed but your partner seemed uninterested and wanted to go out instead.
4. You wanted "simple bedroom sex" but your partner wanted to try something new.
5. Had a date in which your partner suggested you spent time out of the home together, when you wanted to stay in.

Independence-dependence tension (lack of independence)

1. Felt like you and your partner were too dependent on each other and that there was very little independence left in your relationship (e.g., differing opinions, unique tastes and hobbies)
2. Felt as though you couldn't go out with friends on your own because your partner would feel left out or abandoned
3. Felt as though the relationship was too easygoing, in which any opinion or suggestion you expressed was immediately agreed with by your partner
4. Felt suffocated, like you need to get away for a while, to rediscover what it was like to be "me" rather than "we"
5. Had plans with friends that you made without your partner and your partner asked to join at the last moment

Independence-dependence tension (lack of dependence)

1. Felt like you and your partner were too independent and that there was little dependence left in your relationship (e.g., similar opinions, similar tastes and hobbies)
2. Felt left out or abandoned because your partner kept going out with his/her friends without you
3. Felt as though the relationship was marked by disagreement between you and your partner, in which you were always on opposite ends of an opinion

4. Felt alone because your partner hadn't spent a lot of time with you lately, like your relationship was made up of two "me's" instead of one "we"
5. Your partner invited other people to come along on an activity that you thought would be just the two of you

Openness-closedness tension (lack of openness)

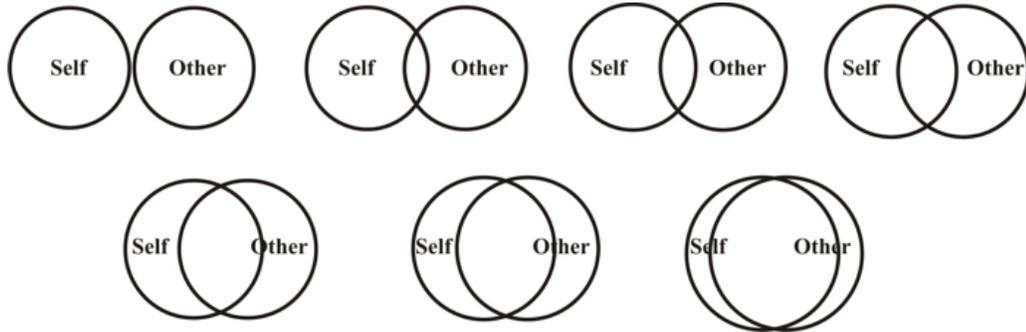
1. You asked your partner about a time in his/her past and he/she didn't open up to you.
2. You asked your partner about something personal and he/she became defensive and secretive.
3. You suggested telling a childhood story to each other, but your partner seemed uninterested.
4. Felt uncertain, like you didn't really know your partner because he/she keeps things private.
5. You wanted to ask your partner something personal but were unsure if he/she would talk to you about it.

Openness-closedness tension (lack of closedness)

1. Your partner asked you about something in your past and you didn't want to tell him/her.
2. Your partner asked you something personal, and you didn't want to tell him/her because you weren't ready to share that information with someone else.
3. Your partner kept pressing you about an issue you didn't feel comfortable talking about it.
4. You felt like there were not enough boundaries in your relationship because your partner wanted to know all your secrets.
5. Had a date with your partner where your partner was being open about an issue; you felt you weren't ready to be as open with him/her.

The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (IOS; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992)

Please consider the following pictures with regard to your relationship with your partner (i.e., one circle represents the self and the other circle represents the other). Please select the picture that best describes the hypothetical relationship.

**Couple activities questionnaire (Harasymchuk & Peetz, 2013)**

To be presented in random order.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Not at all likely Somewhat likely Very likely

How likely is it that you will initiate more new and unfamiliar things with your partner in the near future (starting a new sport, seeing a new place, learning something new together with your partner)?

How likely is it that you will initiate more routine and familiar things with your partner in the near future (going to a familiar restaurant, watching a familiar movie at home with your partner, visiting a favourite destination)?

Appendix D
Debriefing Form
Study 1

Study Title: Experiences in Close Relationships

Thank you for completing this study. The completion code is DREAM416
Please enter this code in the MTurk window to receive US \$0.25.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The main purpose of this study was to assess the various tensions that people face in their close relationships. For instance, people might face a tension between the level of predictability and novelty in their relationship. Both are positive properties to have in the relationship, however, there might be times when there is too much predictability and not enough novelty and vice versa. Our main goal was to assess the link between this type of tension and the experience of relational boredom.

What are the hypotheses?

In this research, we were interested in studying the relationship tensions outlined by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and the experiences associated with them. We predicted that certain relationship tensions would be associated with specific kinds of relationship challenges. For instance, we expected that people experiencing tension for predictability-novelty would be more likely to experience relational boredom.

Why is this important to scientists or to the general public?

This research will increase our understanding of the balance between predictability and novelty in close relationships and its link with a common relationship challenge, namely, relational boredom.

Where can I learn more?

For a summary of relationship boredom and novel activities, please visit:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/between-you-and-me/201209/antidote-boredom-in-your-relationship>

For general information on relationships from the view of social psychology, please visit:

<http://www.scienceofrelationships.com/>

Contact Information

For additional questions or comments, please contact the principal Investigators of this project: Janelle Lebreton (Graduate student, janellelebreton@cmail.carleton.ca) or Dr. Cheryl Harasymchuk (Faculty member, cheryl_harasymchuk@carleton.ca).

In case of ethical concerns about this study, please contact Dr. Shelley Brown (Chair, Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychological Research, 1 613-520-2600, ext. 1505; Shelley_Brown@carleton.ca). For other concerns regarding this study please contact Dr. Joanna Pozzulo (Chair, Dept. of Psychology, 613-520-2600 x 1412;

Psychchair@cunet.carleton.ca).

This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, Canada (14-106).

Thank you for your participation!

To ensure maximum confidentiality, please exit this browser by clicking “Next” at the bottom of this page.

Study 2

Study Title: Experiences in Close Relationships

Thank you for completing this study. The completion code is _____
Please enter this code in the MTurk window to receive US \$0.50.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The main purpose of this study was to assess the novelty-predictability tension that people face in their close relationships. Both are positive properties to have in the relationship, however, there might be times when there is too much predictability and not enough novelty and vice versa. Our main goal was to assess the causal link between this novelty-predictability and the experience of various consequences (e.g., relational boredom, conflict, relationship satisfaction). Additionally, we wanted to make this link with actual relationship scenarios that stress the fault of the partner (that is, when each partner is aligned at the opposite pole of a relationship contradiction). Lastly, we wanted to analyze the link between attachment styles and goal orientation and novelty-predictability.

What are the hypotheses?

In this research, we were interested in studying the novelty-predictability tension outlined by Baxter and Montgomery (1996) and the experiences associated with them. The following hypotheses were predicted for this research.

1. The novelty predictability tension will be associated with lower relationship quality (satisfaction and closeness)
2. Novelty-predictability will be associated with increased relationship challenges (relational boredom, conflict), with the strongest association existing between novelty-predictability and relational boredom
3. Novelty-predictability will be associated with more desire to do new things in the future and less desire to do familiar things in the future
4. Novelty-predictability will be more strongly associated with relational boredom than will the openness-closedness and independence-dependence tensions
5. Novelty-predictability will be more strongly associated with the desire to do new things than will the openness-closedness and independence-dependence tensions
6. For hypothesis 2, this association will be reduced if you are promotion focused (because you are more likely to initiate)
7. For hypothesis 3, this association will be amplified if you are promotion focused, resulting in higher scores

Why is this important to scientists or to the general public?

This research will increase our understanding of the balance between predictability and novelty in close relationships and its link with a common relationship challenge, namely, relational boredom.

Where can I learn more?

For a summary of relationship boredom and novel activities, please visit:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/between-you-and-me/201209/antidote-boredom-in-your-relationship>

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This study has received clearance by the Carleton University Psychology Research Ethics Board, Canada (14-106).

Thank you for your participation!

To ensure maximum confidentiality, please exit this browser by clicking “Next” at the bottom of this page. **Debriefing Form**

Study Title: Relationship Tensions in Close Relationships

Thank you for completing this study. The completion code is ANTHILL
Please enter this code in the Crowdfunder window to receive US \$0.25.

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The aim of this research was to investigate the kinds of challenges people experience in their relationships when they have to choose between two positive things. For instance, couples might have to choose between autonomy or dependence with their partners, being open with their partner or keeping things more personal, and between wanting newness or familiarity with their partner. All of these are positive properties for a relationship, but couples have to strive for a balance of each pair. That is, there might be times when there is too much novelty or too much familiarity and vice versa. Our main goal was to assess the link between these types of tensions and particular consequences (i.e., relational boredom and conflict).

What are the hypotheses?

In this research, we were interested in studying the relationship tensions and the experiences associated with them (that is, when couples have to choose between autonomy or dependence with their partners, being open with their partner or keeping things more personal, and between wanting newness or familiarity with their partner. We predicted that certain relationship tensions would lead to specific kinds of relationship consequences. For instance, we expected that people experiencing tension in having to

choose between wanting newness or familiarity with their partner would be more likely to experience relational boredom.

Why is this important to scientists or to the general public?

This research will increase our understanding of the kinds of decisions couples have to make when it comes to wanting novelty or wanting predictability in their relationship (among other kinds of tensions: being open vs. closed with their partner or being autonomous or dependent on their partner). As well, this research will increase our understanding of the link between these types of tensions and common relationship consequences like relational boredom and conflict.

Where can I learn more?

For a summary of relationship boredom and novel activities, please visit:

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/between-you-and-me/201209/antidote-boredom-in-your-relationship>

For general information on relationships from the view of social psychology, please visit:

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